RAILWAY INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Championing a dynamic rail supply sector

The Journey to Equality:

Creating a Railway for All

Contents

Case Studies

Front cover image: Ickenham Station Access for All improvements, courtesy of Octavius Infrastructure

About RIA

The Railway Industry Association (RIA) is the voice of the UK rail supply community. We help to grow a sustainable, high-performing railway supply industry, and to export UK rail expertise and products.[1] RIA has over 400 companies in membership from a sector that contributes £41 billion in economic growth and £14 billion in tax revenue each year, as well as employing 640,000 people. It is also a vital industry for the UK's economic recovery, supporting green investment and jobs in towns and communities across the UK; for every £1 spent in rail, £2.50 is generated in the wider economy.[2] RIA's membership is active across the whole of railway supply, covering a diverse range of products and services and including both multi-national companies and SME's (60% by number).

Kings Buildings, 16 Smith Square, London SW1P 3HQ

+44 (0) 207 201 0777

ria@riagb.org.uk

www.riagb.org.uk

@railindustry

Foreword

By Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE, Life Peer and former Paralympic Athlete

All rights for disabled people have been hard fought to get over the line, and campaigning for access to the railways seems no different.

Each iteration of some form of anti-discrimination act has served to move the dial. Indeed, we are a long way from wheelchair users having to travel in the Guards Van. However, sometimes it transpires that a great piece of legislation later only serves to move that dial very slightly. In the mid 1990's, the Disability Discrimination Act promised that disabled people would have step-free access to trains by January 1st 2020. This date has been and gone. There was little fanfare apart from disability rights activists noting that it could be up to another hundred years for us to achieve the goal of just being able to get on and off a train. What we must do in the meantime (with the vast majority of the network) is to pre-book (which gives no guarantee of success) or arrive well in advance of the departure time and try and negotiate the right to Turn Up and Go. This is without layering on top the extra complications of establishing whether stations are staffed or researching whether the stations themselves even are accessible.

In the last couple of years there have been some glimmers of hope. Some small parts of the network have become step free because of vision and investment. Social media has played a part in disabled people being able to highlight some of the challenges that they face. There are some great people working in the railway. But we must work out how we get from where we are, to where disabled people have equal access.

This report is an opportunity to highlight the challenges that disabled people face. It lets us think what good might look like, and it clearly lays out the challenge to the sector.

The report presents some shocking facts and figures, even for someone who works in this space. For instance, that people have had to turn down work or have missed an interview, purely linked to the inaccessibility of the network. The personal impact of inaccessibility should not be underestimated. I know from my own personal experience that, on top of all the travelling I do anyway, I can spend hours extra every week having to plan and book my journeys. Hours more than a non-disabled person would have to do.

The social and economic case for improvement is clearly stated. In the next couple of years, we have the chance to achieve that improvement through continued campaigning and legislation. This could be the best opportunity for change that we have seen in a long time, and this report helps remind us all why we need to work harder to bring about that change.

Preface and Acknowledgements

By Sam Bemment BEng(Hons) PhD CEng MIMechE, Technical and Innovation Advisor, Railway Industry Association

This report follows three impactful RIA thought leadership reports, on the topics of Innovation, Data and Digital Technologies, and Rail Retail, which launched at our award-winning innovation conference over the last three years. Each report builds upon the last. This latest instalment is no exception.

Each report has been a significant undertaking, requiring RIA staff to read and research many publications and conduct scores of interviews, polling our membership and senior industry stakeholders to find common, evidenced themes. After establishing consensus, it is a further challenge to present the information in a form digestible by non-experts.

Research for 2022's *A Railway Innovation Strategy*[3] illustrated that timely and fair access to data could unleash private sector innovation, with fantastic potential cost/benefit to treasury. We conducted further cross-industry research over the year, before stating this explicitly in the key asks in 2023's *Data and Digital Technologies in Rail*[4].

Whilst collating evidence for the Transport Select Committee[5] around the topics of 2023's report, we began to better comprehend the relationship between data provision and people's experience with rail. Good experiences are heavily influenced by good rail retail channels, underpinned by good, open data. The correlation between good experiences and revenue growth is clear. 'People' includes those that are not railway passengers; as often people are put off using the railway forever by bad experiences, or even just the potential for a bad experience. RIA published *Destination: Revenue Growth*[6] in 2024. It made key asks of government in the rail retail space, including around the absolute necessity of strong leadership and a stable national vision. It was encouraging to see rail ticketing reforms explicitly included in the King's speech shortly afterwards.[7]

When producing *Destination: Revenue Growth*, we thought it wrong to produce a report about passengers (including 'would-be' passengers and 'I'll-never-ever-be' passengers) without passenger interviews providing first-hand experiences to bring home the reality. It was during those interviews that something became clear. The report targeted increasing modal shift from those who had *chosen other modes*. However, there was a whole section of society who either wanted to, needed to, or in some cases were excited at the prospect of even being able to use the railway, but were simply prevented from doing so by our industry's collective failure on basic accessibility provisions. In essence, the design and operation of many parts of the railway system meant that a system that could have positive social value was instead often a tool for social exclusion. This is not good enough, and a promise to perhaps make it better at some point in the next century is not good enough either.

Authoring this report has been the hardest to date. An innovation report can explore how the future could be brighter with new technology. A retail report can examine the positive impact upon the balance sheet from ridership growth. But hearing the experiences of those that our industry has collectively failed, ignored, and at times, dehumanised, is altogether more humbling. A single publication cannot adequately address the anguish and difficulties of all those who have negative experiences of rail accessibility. However, I do hope that this work helps to promote and accelerate initiatives which can offer real-world, tangible, near-term improvements.

On behalf of the whole RIA team, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this report and each in the preceding series. I hope that this work helps guide our industry towards delivering the level of inclusivity and accessibility that our existing and potential customers deserve, in an accelerated timeframe.

Executive Summary

Use of the rail network remains a major challenge for some passengers with additional needs. At best, this causes uncomfortable or inconvenient journeys. Often, people can be excluded from using the railway. At worst, if systems fail, they can be left in degrading and dehumanising situations. A rail network accessible to all is not just a legal and moral imperative. There is a significant positive social, economic and environmental impact too, from enhanced access to a wider range of education, employment, and leisure activities, and reduced dependence on carbon-intensive private transport and reduced subsidy and benefits spend.

Yet despite widespread consensus, legal frameworks, aligned policy, and significant committed funding for multi-decade improvement programmes, our railways continue to fall short in many areas.

Accessibility provision is inconsistent. 63% of the 1.5bn annual journeys that take place on the network are step-free. However, by some industry measures, step-free access is unavailable at over 40% of stations. Funding has sensibly been targeted where it can make the greatest difference to the most passengers, but this means smaller, rural stations are often last to be upgraded, creating a 'postcode lottery'. Access for All provisions are often delayed or cancelled despite committed funding and strong political will. Underspent budgets represent a tragedy for people awaiting upgrades. There are numerous innovative solutions in the supply chain to help overcome these problems, and RIA strongly recommends their immediate adoption.

Level boarding is being phased in on metro systems at pace but is largely absent from mainline rail. Onboard provisions vary enormously, largely depending on age and type of rolling stock which again means rural passengers suffer disproportionately.

The current solution to making travel arrangements, Passenger Assist, is frequently reported as unreliable, leaving passengers stranded or unable to board. International models demonstrate how technology can enhance reliability and accountability in service delivery. Despite some operators demonstrating best practice, wider adoption to business-as-usual remains slow.

Digital accessibility also presents barriers: many websites, ticketing platforms, and mobile apps do not comply with accessibility guidelines. Deaf and blind passengers face challenges at stations due to inadequate audio announcements, unclear visual displays, and the lack of British Sign Language (BSL) departure boards. Visually impaired, neurodivergent, and other disabled passengers struggle to access essential travel information. RIA members and other organisations have solutions to some of these problems, but uptake is slow and inconsistent.

Despite pockets of best practice, staff training is often insufficient, with many front-line staff unable to assist disabled passengers effectively. Reports indicate instances where staff are unaware of how to operate boarding ramps or communicate with sensory-impaired passengers.

Solving these problems is not just about enabling those with disabilities to travel in an equitable manner. There are many in society who directly or indirectly benefit from an accessible transport system, such as the elderly, parents with children, and the neurodiverse. Together, these groups, and their families, friends, colleagues and employers, make up a significant portion of the population.

The supply chain is poised with innovative solutions to help solve many of these problems but is often hamstrung by government bureaucracy and delay. To help speed adoption, this report presents five clear and evidenced key asks. If adopted, we believe they will make a tangible impact on the accessibility of the rail network, enabling equality, changing countless lives for the better, boosting economic productivity and enabling our industry to meet its legal and moral obligations.

Summary of RIA's Key Asks

1. People directly impacted by decisions should have a direct say in those decisions.

All decisions related to accessibility and inclusivity should adhere to the 'nothing about us without us' principle. Inclusive representation in key rail policy and regulatory bodies should be mandated. An Accessibility and Inclusivity Panel with decision-making authority, rather than just an advisory or consultative role, should be established within Great British Railways (GBR).

2. Reform and fast-track the programme delivering station accessibility improvements.

The Access for All programme needs to be managed more effectively to provide improvements at an accelerated rate. This is vital to meet the needs of efficient investment for the Government, and access to travel for passengers. Streamlined processes are necessary to ensure that committed funds are invested efficiently rather than returned to treasury. Innovations should be adopted at pace, to accelerate deployment by enabling delivery of more, with less.

3. Mandate digital accessibility and data transparency.

The data needed to plan and manage journeys needs to be transparent, standardised, timely and accurate. All journey updates need to be provided in formats accessible to all. It should be mandated that websites and apps follow content accessibility guidelines. Passenger assist should be integrated with GBR's ticket booking processes and offer real-time digital tracking by default.

4. Create a railway culture built on respect and helpfulness, where the focus is on ensuring everybody's journey is important.

Staff should be confident helping all passengers and empowered to provide adequate support in all situations. Training should be mandated, standardised, and inclusively developed in partnership with passengers with additional needs. When service failures occur, operators should ensure all reasonable requests for onward travel are met and provide adequate redress without delay.

5. Mandate inclusive and accessible onboard facilities

Accessible design should be ingrained at all stages of the passenger journey, not an afterthought. All rolling stock purchases or refurbishments should adopt an 'Accessibility First' approach, as demonstrated by Nexus, Merseyrail, TfL and others. Unassisted boarding should be the absolute priority, with a full compliance date set within the next decade. Walk-up assisted boarding should be provided wherever possible until this is achieved.

Introduction

Accessibility within the GB transport system in general, and railway system in particular, has been discussed in countless reports. Improvements have been funded by consecutive governments. All organisations agree on the general principles, if not the specifics and timing. There is strong consensus on what is an ideal end state: a railway that is accessible to, and usable by, all in society, with assistance only when required. This consensus has underpinned funding and programmes of work which have spanned decades, governments, ownership structures and operating models[8].

The ideal railway has features such as step-free access, level boarding, inclusive onboard provisions, well-trained and empowered staff, and timely and accurate information accessible to every passenger before, throughout and after the journey. In some areas, Britain leads Europe – for example, over 99% of mainline platforms now have compliant tactiles. Yet in other areas it lags, and progress toward improvements remains slow; sometimes glacial. It also lags in financial support, with the £54 disabled-persons railcard only providing 1/3 off, in contrast to free or flat-fare travel on overseas networks which often also offer mobility guarantees.[10]

Amongst others explored later, three recent pieces of work from the ORR,[11] Network Rail,[12] and NCAT (the National Centre for Accessible Transport),[13] have highlighted the same major issues: poor station access, a lack of level boarding, unreliable Passenger Assist services, inadequate and inaccessible information systems,

As of 2025, The National Centre for Accessible Transport (NCAT) – which includes several RIA members and partner organisations – have collated 630 reports, investigations and data sources on the topic. Their excellent, searchable resource collection includes abstracts of each source and is available online for free.[35]

'At the current rate of progress, disabled people will have to wait until 2070 for the railway network to have full step-free access in Britain.' **– Get On Board 2020: Making the economic case for "levelling up" inclusive transport, Leonard Cheshire**[32]

"At current annual rates of investment, spend on station accessibility, it will take around 100 years to make the entirety of the station estate step-free" **– Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)**[41]

'It is no coincidence that one of the most successful products in the world, the iPhone, is also one of the most accessible. The same logic applies to all products, including transport'
– Martyn Sibley, disability advocate.

'To achieve a truly accessible transport network, we must identify and tackle the various barriers that disabled people experience along an entire route (after all, there is no use having an accessible fleet of vehicles on a bus route if the route to the bus stop is impassable).' **– Transport for All**[23]

"We don't have any choice... yet we're supposed to be grateful for a third off travel. Blindness can transform station navigation from a 5-minute process to a 30, sometimes 60-minute ordeal, completely reliant on staff assistance. Yet if I miss a train by one minute, I'm liable for a massive walk-up fare despite being a high-spending regular user."
– Neil Barnfather MBE, Disabilities Advocate

"It is absurd that we continue to buy and run trains that embed dependency and risk in their design. Disabled people want to travel independently where possible. Level boarding not only brings that ideal closer but it makes everyone's journey easier and safer. This is a win for everyone." **– Alan Benson, Chair, Transport for All and Campaign member, Campaign for Level Boarding.**[42]

'41% of train stations do not have step-free access.[2] *This lack of accessibility leaves many disabled people unable to participate fully in society.'* **– Get On Board 2020: Making the economic case for "levelling up" inclusive transport, Leonard Cheshire**[32]

"Disabled people should have the same access to transport as everybody else, to be able to go where everyone else goes and to do so easily, confidently and without extra cost." **– Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee vision statement.**

"Cost is often used as a reason for not delivering inclusive design but many elements like clear signage, good lighting are no more expensive. In our experience not considering them costs more in dealing with complaints, legal challenges and issues that can emerge later in a project's life-cycle, causing delays which can damage our reputation and passenger loyalty." **– Network Rail Inclusive Design Manual.**[12]

'Temporary impairments are short-term conditions that affect an individual's abilities for a limited time. Examples of temporary disabilities include people who have an eye infection, a broken arm, a head injury or concussion. Like permanent disabilities, anyone can suffer from one or more temporary conditions at the same time.'
– Government Accessibility and Inclusive Design Manual.[20]

The proportion who received all of the assistance that they had booked has declined to 76% in 2023-2024 from 81% in 2022-2023, with a simultaneous rise in the proportion who received none of the assistance that they booked, from 8% to 12%.
– ORR Report: 'Experiences of Passenger Assist'.[33]

'Situational impairments are caused by environmental factors or specific situations that affect an individual's abilities. Examples of situational disabilities include people holding a baby, wearing headphones or have glare affecting the screen on their device. It's important to understand how people use [...] products and services, and the situations they're using them in, to avoid introducing barriers.' **– Government Accessibility and Inclusive Design Manual.**[19]

and poor communications. What these reports fail to highlight, however, is that there are often solutions already in the market and ready to be deployed, which can lead to fast and low-cost improvements. The solutions span all aspects of railway accessibility. From big-civils techniques, developed by Tier-1 RIA members over many years, to digital solutions that are the brainchild of those with lived experience and a will to solve issues particular to their requirements.

Providing equality of accessibility is not just a clear legal obligation[14,15], it is also a clear moral obligation. There are an estimated 16.1 million disabled people in the UK, 7 million of them working age[16]. One in seven of the population are Neurodivergent.[17] Britain's population is aging, with associated mobility challenges.[18] Many people have additional needs: parents with prams and small children, and those with situational,[19] or temporary disabilities.[20] Of course, not all

What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity refers to differences in the way the human brain works and processes information. It is estimated that around 1 in 7 people (around 15% of the UK population) are neurodivergent. Most systems for healthcare, learning, and employment have been set up by neurotypical people, meaning neurodivergent people often face inequalities when navigating systems not designed for their neurodivergent differences. Neurodivergence includes, but is not limited to, Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia, and Tourettes Syndrome.
— The Donaldson Trust[17]

'Who should railways be for? Many railway systems have been built – and continue to be built – to exclude rather than include large swathes of society […] Discrimination remains common, not least considering the pressures of accessibility and affordability. […] If we want the future to be better not just for some people but for everyone, then the railway that will deliver that future must be usable by everyone too.' **– Gareth Dennis, Rail commentator, 'How the railways will fix the future'**[30]

'Factors such as age, disability, and to a different extent travelling with young children or with heavy luggage, are a barrier to people's mobility and, in turn, their ability to access jobs, services, and other activities. Therefore a key objective of transport policy, planning and regulation should be to guarantee and enhance the accessibility of transport systems to all passengers, including those who are mobility impaired and encumbered' **– The Economic Benefits of Improved Accessibility to Transport Systems, OECD**[40]

'Businesses lose approximately £2 billion a month by ignoring the needs of disabled people. Transport Providers lose £42 million' (equating to ~£500m per annum)
– The Purple Pound[34]

'The availability of accessible public local transport and long-distance railway services aren't just a matter of convenience; it's a fundamental right. Accessibility in travel is crucial in strengthening participation for people with disabilities across various spheres of life. Accessibility in travel is more than just structural adaptations like ramps or elevators. Accessibility means also providing assistive technologies, passenger information that is intelligible to all, and creating service offerings for travellers with special needs. When railway stations and trains are designed to include everybody, it empowers everybody. For people with disabilities, it fosters social equality and opens more opportunities for individuals with diverse needs.' **– Omio's 'Europe's Most Accessible Railway Nations'.**[9]

'Inclusive transport would make careers and fulfilling work so much more accessible for disabled people, which would mean not just increased spending power, but also increased earning power.'
– Get On Board 2020: Making the economic case for "levelling up" inclusive transport, Leonard Cheshire.[32]

require any additional support, but for those that do, the law states rail travel should be just as usable as for others.

Aside from the legal and moral obligations, equality of accessibility is an economic and social necessity. The 'Purple Pound' – the spending power of disabled individuals and their households – is estimated at £274 billion per year in the UK.[16] Failure to provide an inclusive railway network means excluding a significant portion of the population from economic participation, reducing ridership, and increasing reliance on costly alternatives such as private transport and social care.[21]

The wider societal benefits of inclusivity extend beyond rail travel.[22] An accessible and equitable transport system enables all individuals to access education, employment, healthcare, and social activities, reducing economic inactivity and dependency on government support.

Our population in statistics:

- 16.1 million disabled people, that's 1 in 4 people
- 23% working age adults are disabled
- 45% of pension age adults are disabled
- 32% of households in England have at least 1 disabled person
- 37.9% of households in Wales have at least 1 disabled person
- around 1.5 million people have a learning disability
- estimated 1 in 10 people have dyslexia
- estimated 2 million people are living with sight loss
- 12 million have hearing loss greater than 25dBHL
- estimated 151,000 people use British Sign Language
- predictions that the number living with disability will increase in the UK by 25%

— Scope[16], ONS[24], RNIB[25], RNID[26], Mencap[27], NHS[28], The Lancet.[29]

Every pound invested in accessibility generates economic returns, benefitting not just passengers with additional needs, but also wide tracts of society: elderly travellers, parents with prams, and those with temporary impairments.[23]

RIA, its members, and those consulted as part of this research, believe that the pace of change is not quick enough. Failure to address the issues in a timely manner will have lasting consequences:

- **Human Impact** – Disabled passengers will remain unable to travel independently, limiting their access to work, education, and leisure, thereby perpetuating social exclusion.
- **Economic Loss** – The railway industry will continue to miss out on potential revenue from disabled passengers and their wider social networks. Treasury will miss out on the tax revenue, and incur higher costs.
- **Increased Legal and Reputational Risks** – Non-compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and rising public pressure may result in legal action, regulatory penalties, and reputational damage.
- **Costlier Future Work, Fewer Benefits** – Waiting to complete accessibility improvements is a false economy. Delaying or cancelling work now will necessitate more expensive work later, as the cost of work only escalates with time, and benefits do not accrue until work is complete.
- **Falling Behind International Peers** – The UK risks becoming an outlier in transport

'People with mobility impairments travel a lot less overall than people without, travelling around 3,500 miles per year compared to 7,500 for those without mobility impairments.' **– Get On Board 2020: Making the economic case for "levelling up" inclusive transport, Leonard Cheshire.**[32]

'...over 70% of Londoners with mental health conditions, mobility impairments and long-term illnesses say they would travel more if they did not experience barriers such as access or cost constraints' **– Travel in London: Understanding our diverse communities, Transport for London**[37]

'10% of disabled people in the UK state that inaccessible transport is a key barrier to education. Disabled people are twice as likely as other citizens to have no recognised qualification, and over one third of all those without any formal qualifications are disabled.' **– The transport accessibility gap, Motability Foundation**[39]

5% of all respondents had to turn down a job and 5% missed a job interview due to inaccessible transport. For those who were employed, this increased to 6% and 8% respectively. For those who were not working but seeking work this was 7% and 6% respectively. **– Leonard Cheshire/ComRes Disabled Adult Survey 2018**[38]

'Challenging transport-based isolation must be a government priority in any changes and legislation relating to bus and rail services'
– Stephen Brookes MBE, Transport Policy Advisor, Disability Rights UK[36]

'With cost-effective materials and appropriate design and planning from the start, ongoing maintenance and adjustment costs can often be less (...) incorporation of inclusive thinking from the outset of the design process will be cheaper than trying to address this retrospectively or later during the process. Inclusive design also enables the greatest number of people to partake in the local economy, thereby increasing the economic viability of local businesses.'
– CIHT, 'Creating a Public Realm for All'.[31]

'We have found that the total cost of making the entire railway network step-free to platform level would be between £2bn and £6bn' **– Get On Board 2020: Making the economic case for "levelling up" inclusive transport, Leonard Cheshire.**[32]

'Our new analysis estimates that the annual socio-economic benefit of closing the entire transport accessibility gap for disabled people in the UK would deliver benefits in the region of £72.4 billion annually to the UK economy. **– The transport accessibility gap, Motability Foundation**[39]

'The economic benefits of improved accessibility are often overlooked and almost always not explicitly valued in traditional transport appraisal and evaluation practices. While costs are often known, benefits are not clearly defined, quantified and documented (...) economic valuations undertaken to date demonstrate that the magnitude of potential benefits from improved accessibility is often large enough to offset the costs'
– The Economic Benefits of Improved Accessibility to Transport Systems, OECD[40]

accessibility, damaging its global reputation and failing to meet international best practices.

- **Carbon Cost** – Arising from those unable to use rail having to resort to more single-person, bespoke journeys on carbon-intensive transport modes.

In part, Britain lags some other countries due to the average age of our infrastructure, and the fact our complex railway prevents simple adaptations. However, there is no reason why our digital, retail, information provision, passenger assistance, and more, cannot be world-leading.

This report features member case studies to illustrate that there are innovations and products available now that can help overcome many of these hurdles, without requiring investment significantly above that already committed. First, we shall examine the economic and social case for accelerated change, and explore what other organisations are saying.

Our Aging Population

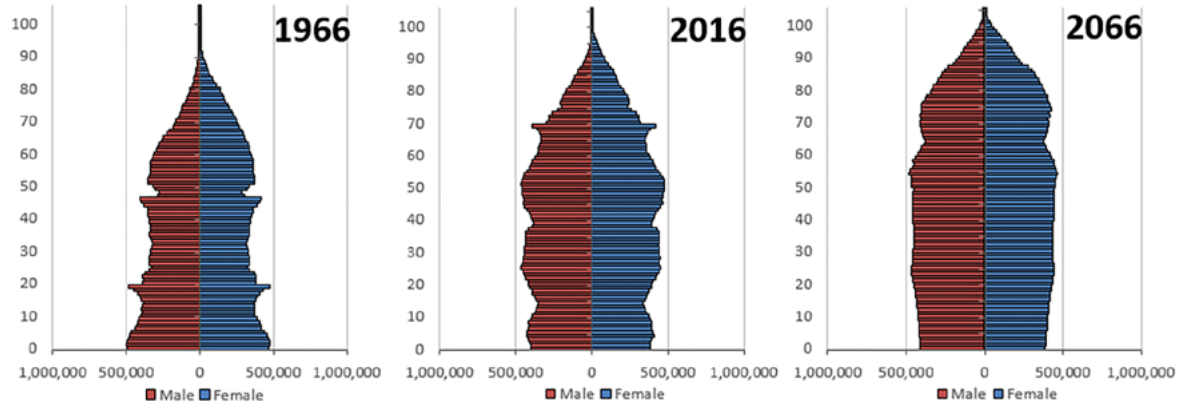


Figure 1: Population pyramids, 1966, 2016 and 2066 (principal projection), UK]

Projections produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show the UK's population is ageing, driven primarily by two factors. Firstly, improvements in life expectancy mean that people are living longer and reaching older ages. Secondly, people are having fewer children and are having children later in life.

The ageing and changing structure of the population will bring opportunities and challenges for the economy, services and society at national and local levels.

By 2066 there will be a further 8.6 million projected UK residents aged 65 years and over, taking the total number in this group to 20.4 million and making up 26% of the total population.

This increase in numbers is broadly equivalent to the population of London today.

The fastest increase will be seen in the 85 years and over group. In mid-2016, there were 1.6 million people aged 85 years and over (2% of the total population); by 2066 this is projected to treble to 5.1 million people (7% of the total population). In contrast, the population aged 16 to 64 years is projected to increase by only 5% by 2066.

The aging population is not equally spread across local areas: older people make up higher proportions of the rural and coastal populations.

– Angele Storey, Office for National Statistics (ONS)[18]

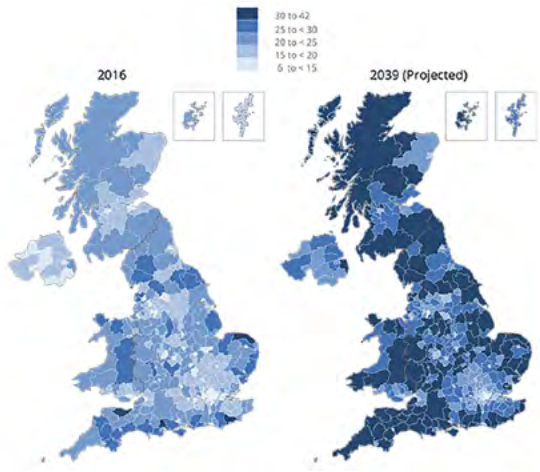


Figure 2: UK Proportion of the population aged 65 years and over, 2016 and 2039

The social and economic case for improvement

Public transport is a key enabler for education, employment, and healthcare access. When transport is not usable, passengers with additional needs face exclusion from basic opportunities.[32,38] The link between transport access and social mobility is clear throughout literature: in areas with good transport links, employment and education rates are significantly higher, as are metrics related to health, happiness and wellbeing.[41,43,44]

A 2015 DfT review sought to establish the social and economic loss arising from disparate transport access.[45] It concluded that the economic effects of more accessible transport would be positive but could not quantify the cost/benefit ratio. More recent reports have done so, such as Leonard Cheshire and WPI Economics[32]:

'We have found that the total cost of making the entire railway network step-free to platform level would be between £2bn and £6bn(…) We estimate that this would amount to just 1–3% of total transport capital investment between now and 2030 (…) analysis shows a fully accessible rail system could:

- *Help around 51,000 people with work limiting disabilities into employment (24,000 of whom are actively seeking work and 27,000 of whom say they would like to work), leading to benefits such as offering the Exchequer benefits of £450 million per year – Delivering an economic output (GVA) boost of £1.3 billion (via benefits reduction and tax revenue).*
- *Help around 85,000 employed people with work-limiting disabilities into a new job. As there are significant earnings and productivity benefits to employees gaining new jobs, it is reasonable to expect further positive outcomes in increased earnings and an additional economic boost.*
- *Help a further 43,500 unemployed people and 115,000 employed people to attend an interview that may lead to a new job'*

The Motability foundation offered similar analysis in 2022[39], arriving at £72.4 billion annually across all transport modes:

'Our new analysis estimates that the annual socio-economic benefit of closing the entire transport accessibility gap for disabled people in the UK would deliver benefits in the region of £72.4 billion annually to the UK economy. This figure represents the potential addressable benefit from making transport accessible for disabled people. This is derived from three main sources: Improved well-being of individuals (£43.4bn), access to employment (£28.9bn), and access to education (£0.112bn).'

The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) reported in 2017:

'The economic benefits of improved accessibility are often overlooked and almost always not explicitly valued in traditional transport appraisal and evaluation practices. While costs are often known, benefits are not clearly defined, quantified and documented (…) economic valuations undertaken to date demonstrate that the magnitude of potential benefits from improved accessibility is often large enough to offset the costs. This is the case across a variety of techniques used, ranging from conventional welfare benefits to the inclusion of cross sector impacts (e.g. reduced health and social care costs) and broader economic impacts (e.g. increased participation to economic activities).'

A note on ticket subsidies

Some disabled rail travel is subsidised more than standard tickets, via the 1/3 off DPRC (disabled-person s railcard).[46] Whilst this is a notable contribution, the card is limited in scope and applicability and falls far behind offerings in some other nations. As those with additional needs often have significant additional transport costs, there may be a social and economic case to make travel free, as on some European networks.[10] There are around 270,000 DPRC in circulation in 2024.[47] How much ticket subsidy this equates to is not published, and it is therefore unclear whether this is greater or lesser expense than would otherwise be required for other transport modes. Fare policy is, however, beyond the scope of this report.

What do others say?

This section provides perspectives from the published views of some selected advocacy organisations, charities, and other representative groups.

The National Centre for Accessible Transport (NCAT)

Understand and identify the barriers

NCAT is an evidence centre that seeks to understand, document and analyse the transport landscape and identify opportunities for change. They produced the excellent Transport Barriers Database, an online resource of interviews describing experiences of transport in the UK.[48] NCAT's *Understanding and Identifying Barriers to Transport*[13] report highlights the barriers faced by disabled rail passengers:

- 91% encountered at least one barrier on trains.
- 64% struggled with boarding due to step-free access issues.
- 52% found station access unreliable, and 37% noted poor toilet facilities.

The organisation has 3 main lobbying points:

- **Build accessibility into all new railway projects**, ensuring inclusive design from the outset.
- **The Department for Transport should publish a strategy to update accessibility standards** by 2030. This must prioritise key areas of concern identified by disabled people, including the issues highlighted by research – i.e. step-free access, station facilities, and wheelchair spaces.
- **Industry must involve disabled people in decision-making** at all levels, ensuring their input through advisory groups and increased staff representation.

The Transport Barriers Database is an online resource of 1,195 interviews with disabled people about their experiences of transport in the UK.[48]

Disabled Peoples Organisation Forum England

Nothing About Us Without Us

The Disabled people's manifesto[49] includes several points of relevance to transport:

Independence: *We want the right to live independently with choice and control over the support we get (…) Infrastructure investment plans and regulatory measures to ensure Disabled people's access to the environment, transport, information and communication.*

Inclusion: *We want plans for every aspect of life to address specific needs of Disabled people from the outset (…) Co-produce policies and programmes at national and local level with Disabled people and our organisations.*

Transport for All

Information and step-free access

Transport for All's *'Are we there yet'* report examines barriers to transport for disabled people,[23] highlighting the main concerns to travellers with additional needs. Journey planning information, Step-free access, assistance, facilities and a lack of accessible information are all cited as concerns:

'With only an estimated 25% of mainline rail stations in England having step-free access between all platforms (and a third of London Underground stations), planning out a route that uses only step-free stations is necessary.'

> ***"I once didn't plan and I ended up stuck on a tube station platform as the only exit was up 40 steps."***

Survey respondents were complimentary about light rail, including the provision of step-free access and level boarding.

Leonard Cheshire

Inaccessibility has a real human impact

Leonard Cheshire, a leading disability charity, has produced reports detailing the real-life consequences of inaccessible stations.[32,38]

"This lack of accessibility leaves many disabled people unable to participate fully in society. The impact of inaccessible transport is far-reaching — extending to every aspect of disabled people's lives. 22% of disabled people said that inaccessible transport made them feel isolated, 21% said it had a negative impact on their mental health, 18% said they were unable to keep active and 15% said they were unable to go out with family or friends."

Leonard Cheshire launched its Get on Board campaign in December 2019, calling for the Government to enshrine in legislation its commitment to ensuring rail travel – and public transport more widely – is made fully accessible to all by 2030.

"Inclusive transport is a fundamental right for disabled people that enables people to have full and engaging lives (…) The UK Government must demonstrate real commitment in delivering on its promises – backed by investment and subject to an ongoing review of progress"

The National Autistic Society

Overstimulation and Sensory Barriers

The National Autistic Society has highlighted the sensory challenges faced by autistic passengers when using the railway network[50]. Many autistic passengers struggle with noise levels, unpredictable changes, and lack of quiet spaces, making rail travel overwhelming and stressful.[51]

A key recommendation is the introduction of Quiet Zones, designed with neurodivergent passengers in mind. These could include reduced lighting, soundproofed seating areas at stations, and quiet carriages on trains.

The organisation also calls for better staff training on how to support neurodivergent passengers, including communications training and the use of hidden disabilities lanyards[52].

The Campaign for Level Boarding

A target of 2040 to achieve level boarding across the network.

The Campaign for Level Boarding was established in late 2019 to address what was seen as a lack of ambition among the rail industry to achieve widespread level boarding across the UK rail network.[42] It is an unofficial network of disabled rail users, railway engineers and other industry professionals, seeking to use their combined experience and knowledge to improve safety for everyone. The key asks of the campaign are to:

- Establish a procurement standard for all new trains to be "low-floor", with extendable gap fillers, to match the platform height.
- Begin a rolling programme of platform improvements to bring all platforms up to the existing UK standard (915mm height, 730mm offset).
- Agree a target of 2040 to achieve level boarding across the UK rail network.

The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

Digital Systems are often inaccessible

The Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB) has criticised the lack of accessible information across digital platforms, station announcements, and signage.[53] Their 2023 report highlights that only 62% of UK train operators comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines,[54] making journey planning difficult for blind and partially sighted passengers.

RNIB has collated case studies showing that many train operator websites and apps lack screen reader compatibility, forcing visually impaired passengers to rely on sighted assistance to book tickets, or check departure boards where small text can also cause issues.[55] Real-time service disruption updates are often provided only in visual formats, with little consideration for passengers who rely on auditory or tactile information.

The charity has urged the UK rail industry to mandate full WCAG 2.1 compliance across all

websites and apps. They also advocate for the nationwide rollout of audible information systems like Japan's rail network, where real-time announcements are provided through tablet notifications and station-wide PA systems.[56]

Sense

Accessibility for multi-sensory impaired passengers

Sense, a charity supporting multi-sensory impaired people, has raised concerns about the severe lack of accessibility provisions for passengers with dual sensory loss. They argue that current rail accessibility efforts overwhelmingly focus on single impairments[57].

Deafblind passengers require tactile wayfinding solutions, such as raised-line maps, braille station guides, and vibration-based notifications for service updates. Another key issue is the lack of trained staff capable of communicating with Deafblind passengers. The charity has suggested that train operators introduce basic training in tactile signing and Deafblind awareness, ensuring that staff can effectively assist passengers with dual sensory loss.

Royal National Institute for Deaf People

The Need for BSL integration

RNID have strongly advocated for better inclusion of British Sign Language (BSL) within rail communications, and better staff training.[58] Their research has found that many deaf passengers struggle to receive travel updates because platform announcements are audio-only and real-time visual displays do not always provide adequate information.[59]

'Staff training plays an important role in creating an accessible transport system. If staff can communicate effectively with people with hearing loss, this will mitigate some of the risks and barriers that people with hearing loss can face when using transport.

People with hearing loss are often struggling to access real-time information. This is because announcements are often audio only and not visual too. The need for Assisted Travel could be reduced if real-time information is improved. Our vision is for all stations and trains to have real-time information available for people with hearing loss.[58]'

> ***"I don't find that staff are very deaf aware. Some of them mumble or don't take care to make sure you can see their face. I recall trying to get advice from a staff member at King's Cross and she just kept walking and not looking at me whilst speaking. Not helpful..."***

> ***"People can be so rude to you, they never guess you can't hear and can treat you in an awful way."***

> ***"I was once stranded at Cardiff station. It's a huge place and although I knew the time of the train there had been a change of platform. I had to go around asking station staff where the train was. By the time I found the platform I was just in time to see the back of the train disappearing round a bend. I was about 3 hours late getting home to Cornwall. Lots of stress."***

Disability Rights UK

"Nothing About Us Without Us"

Disability Rights UK campaigns for greater involvement of disabled passengers in transport decision-making, stating that public bodies need to anticipate the barriers Disabled people might face and take steps to address those barriers.[60]

Stephen Brookes MBE, their Transport policy advisor, sates:

"Disabled public transport passengers are consistently and disproportionally impacted by increasingly regular failings in the provision of services. We must change the piecemeal approach in the industry from the top to bottom (...) Train companies need to take responsibility as a form of duty of care to say they will no longer accept "failed assists", or service glitches as Disabled people have a right to travel."

The charity also draws attention to a growing digital divide:

"Badly thought through processes affecting not just Disabled people but also older and less fit passengers is the increased creation of the Digital Divide as smart technology and APPs are advertised and promoted to give the best deals and latest travel information. We regularly hear from our members that this leads to an increasing two-tier service and creates some growing exclusion and discrimination"

"There needs to be a coordinated plan to make the country's public transport system accessible to everyone. I say that if we get it right for all disabilities, we have got it right for everyone.[61]

"Most Disabled people don't want hassle, they don't want compensation, we want to get a decent bus or rail journey.[61]

The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)

DPTAC has expressed significant concerns over the negative effects of accessibility of the UK railway network[41]:

"For many disabled people their inability to use the rail network, because of physical or other barriers, or because of a lack of confidence, prevents them from being able to access employment, education and health care, as well as participating in leisure, social and commercial activities"

DPTAC warns that: *"It is difficult to envisage a railway where there are not, at least, some operational and physical characteristics that represent a barrier to some disabled people (…) At current annual rates of investment spend on station accessibility, it will take around 100 years to make the entirety of the station estate step-free to new-build standards."*

DPTAC has consulted on changes to railway staffing and new technology introduction.[62] It warns that reliance on digital alternatives assumes all passengers have equal access to, and ability to use, technology, which is not the case. "For the foreseeable future, there will also be a need to provide information in non-digital formats (print and by telephone)"[41].

The committee has faced strong criticism from disability advocates, who argue that its responses to government "lack in any content or meaning, there is no recognition of the discriminatory service failures we currently experience, and it doesn't give the firm commitment to disabled people's rights we need and deserve from our representatives.[63]"

Policy, Guidelines and Standards

Policy plays a critical role in shaping the accessibility of the UK railway network. Provision on the network today is the result of accessibility policies set out over many previous decades. Similarly, decisions made today will have long-term ramifications, affecting millions of people over the coming decades.

Recent policy is primarily influenced by the Equality Act (2010), which legally mandates that transport providers make reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled passengers.[14] The Act establishes the Public Sector Equality Duty, which required authorities to consider how their policies and decisions affect people with different protected characteristics.[64] This act superseded the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), which, was the first UK legislation protecting disabled people against discrimination, in areas including transport.[65] Other frameworks include:

- **The Plan for Rail (2021):** While advocating a customer-centric railway system, it acknowledged that a lack of comprehensive accessibility data was hampering effective planning.[66] This acknowledgement triggered the NSAA (National Stations Accessibility Audit), performed by RIA member AtkinsRéalis, of the accessibility of facilities provided at every UK train station. The scope of the audit, and by extension the benchmarking framework, encompasses the entire station including interchange zones and approach, as well as platform and train boarding.
- **National Disability Strategy (2021):** This strategy sets out the actions the Government will take to improve the everyday lives of all disabled people. It outlines commitments to improving transport accessibility but lacks enforceability.[67]
- **Railways Act 1993 & Railways Regulations 2005:** Provide a legal framework for passenger assistance schemes but fail to address systemic issues such as unreliable staffing a service provision across different TOCs.[68]
- **National Technical Specification Notice (NTSN):** Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRM) for which compliance is mandatory, makes provisions for those with reduced mobility.[15] The corresponding implementation plan cites the access for all programme as the primary method of delivery. It provides a cutoff date for compliance of legacy rolling stock (2020), but not stations.[69]
- **Access for All (AfA) Programme:** Launched in 2006, this scheme aims to improve station accessibility.[8] Its slow implementation remains a critical concern for many disability rights organisations, with Network Rail admitting it had 'significantly underperformed', triggering an efficiency investigation.[70]
- **Network Rail Inclusive Design Strategy (2024):** A recent effort to integrate accessibility into all new rail projects, ensuring that step-free access, visual and auditory guidance, and

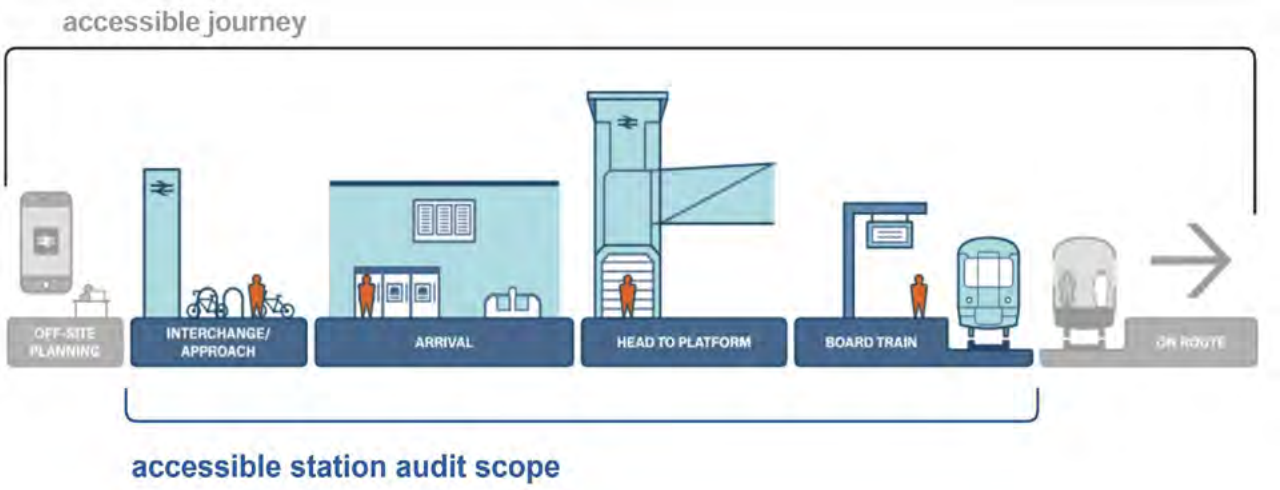


IMAGE COURTESY OF NETWORK RAIL

improved ticketing systems are part of all future developments.[12]

- The **Inclusive Transport Strategy** (2018) sets out the Government's plans to make the transport system more inclusive and better for disabled people.[71] It falls short in defining any deadlines for compliance with the modifications it suggests, citing AfA as the primary delivery method.
- The **Inclusive Transport Leaders Scheme** is one of the Department for Transport's Inclusive Transport Strategy commitments.[72] It aims to improve disabled people's access to the transport system, providing a framework that operators can use to make services more accessible to disabled people. It offers operators the opportunity to earn accreditations that acknowledge and celebrate their work.
- The **Accessible railway stations: design standards** are a code of practice for design standards for accessible railway stations. It aims to ensure that any infrastructure work at stations makes railway travel easier for disabled passengers.[73] The documents largely discuss the practical implementation of the PRM NTSN. There was recent (2023) consultation on this guidance.
- The **DPTAC – Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee** – is an independent expert committee established by the Transport Act 1985, providing advice to the Government on the transport needs of disabled people.[74] DPTAC works with the Department for Transport to influence policy, and monitor how DfT delivers its commitments, such as those set out in the Inclusive Transport Strategy.

Recent policy, guidelines and standards are broadly in agreement that universal accessibility is the goal across all transport modes, of which the railway is a key part. However, there is less alignment – and in some cases no clarity whatsoever - around timing, funding, methodology, and metrics/monitoring. This has hindered progress. Problems include:

- **Inconsistent policy implementation:**

There is inconsistency of policy application across rail operators. This is particularly evident in station upgrades, where some locations have seen substantial improvements while others remain entirely inaccessible.Whilst well-intentioned, different operators have implemented initiatives in varying ways, causing confusion and travel anxiety.

"There is a postcode lottery when it comes to accessible travel."
– Neil Barnfather MBE, disability advocate

"Make the journey a consistent experience across operators, stations, urban and rural areas. Allow passengers to travel with confidence knowing that their needs are accommodated from home to destination."
– PriestmanGoode

- Funding **allocation and utilisation Issues:**

Failing rollout of the AfA programme has led to severe underutilisation of allocated funds.[8] This stagnation has been widely criticised by advocacy groups, who argue that existing funding must be utilised effectively before introducing new schemes. A 2023 inquiry found that many local authorities lack clarity on how to apply for funding, leading to delays in critical accessibility improvements.

- **Lack of data**

The Plan for Rail explicitly acknowledged that there is no centralised data collection on railway accessibility.[66] Without clear and agreed metrics, it becomes difficult to measure progress and identify problem areas. There has been recent improvement with the NSAA (National Stations Accessibility Audit).

"How can we fix what we don't measure?"
– Transport for All[23]

- **Lack of measurable targets or compliance dates**

Almost all policy documents stop short of setting concrete target dates for compliance. This enables delay, funding re-allocation, and in-extremis, de-prioritisation or cancellation of work, for instance in the AfA underspend.

- **Inadequate representation in decision making**

There is often a lack of consultation with disabled passengers. Currently, there is no mandated requirement for disabled representation in key transport decision-making bodies, leading to policies that often miss practical accessibility concerns.

The National Centre for Accessible Transport (NCAT)'s views on standards and guidelines:

Millions of disabled people face significant barriers to train travel. For many, this has turned the railways into a force for social and economic exclusion, hindering access to education and employment opportunities and limiting their ability to stay connected with family and friends.

NCAT's recent *Understanding and Identifying Barriers to Transport* report explores the barriers disabled people face when travelling on different modes of transport.[13] Our UK-wide survey of 1,195 disabled people found that respondents were likely to experience difficulties when travelling by rail, with 91% reporting that they had encountered at least one barrier on trains.

The most frequently cited obstacle to train travel was the lack of step-free access on the network. Sixty-four percent of disabled people said they had difficulty getting on and off trains, with many highlighting the difference between the height of the platform and the train as a particular concern.

The problems often do not end once disabled people have boarded their train. One-third of disabled passengers reported that they are sometimes unable to find a wheelchair space.

Stations are also often inaccessible. For example, 52% of disabled train passengers said step-free access at stations was lacking or unreliable, and 28% told us that "general station design" was a barrier.

Disabled people said that they sometimes had difficulty navigating stations because of the long distances they were required to walk. Others pointed out that stations often do not have lifts and, when they do, long queues can form because non-disabled people choose to use them out of convenience. Thirty-seven percent said that toilets and changing places facilities were either unavailable at the stations they use or of poor quality.

Finally, disabled people reported that their interactions with other people could be a significant barrier to using the railways. One-third of respondents said that the attitudes and behaviours of staff and members of the public on the network were often negative. Half also indicated that staff assistance was unreliable.

The needs of disabled passengers on the railways have long been overlooked.

While the government's commitment to making accessibility one of the key principles of its railway reform programme is welcome, NCAT has called on ministers to take a more strategic approach to the delivery of accessible transport.

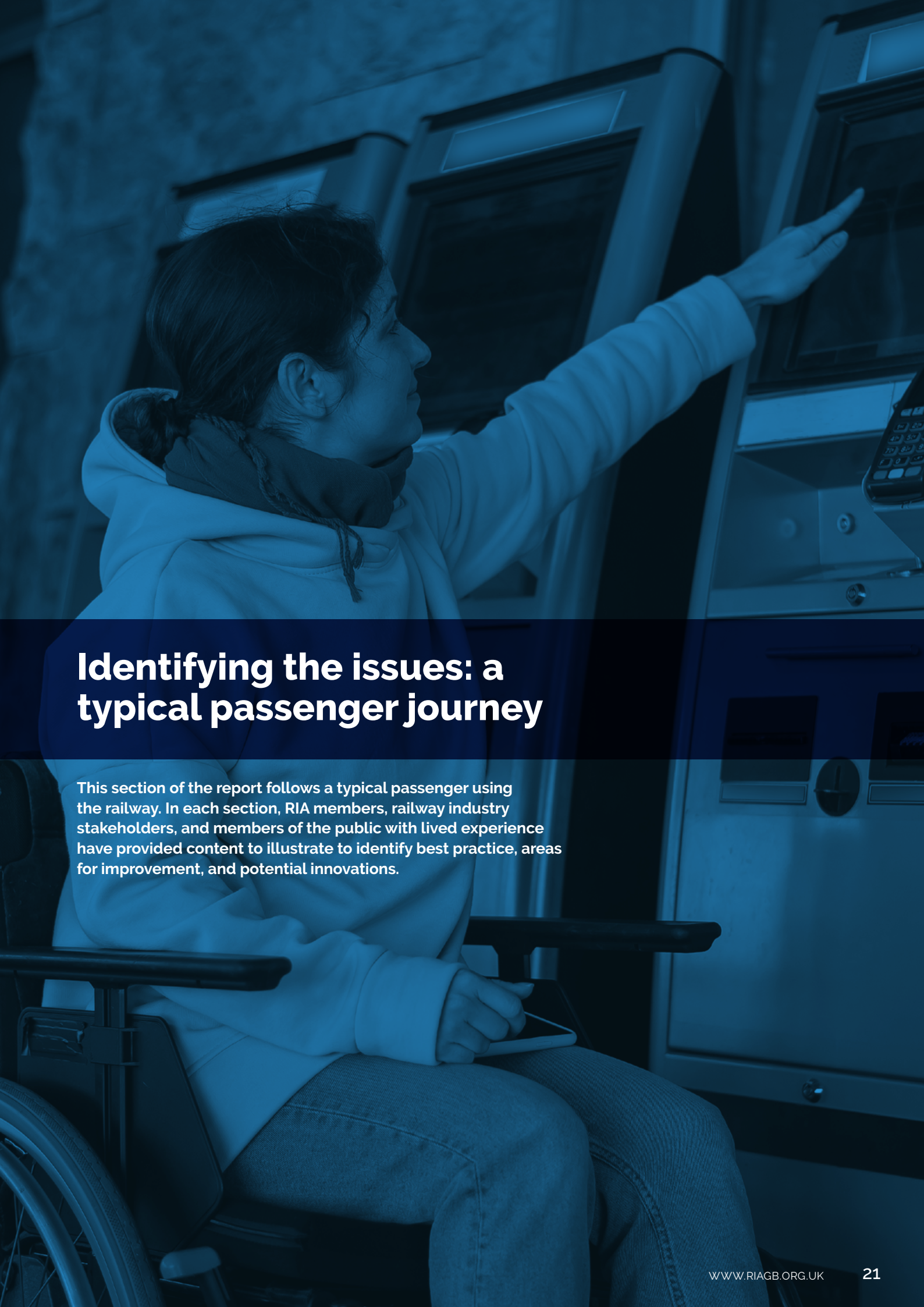
This means making sure accessibility is built into all new developments from the start.

NCAT's discussions with industry and policy makers have demonstrated that there are too few formal accessibility guidelines and standards in the transport sector. We have therefore recommended that government should produce a comprehensive strategy to update accessible design standards for transport infrastructure, technologies, and services and make sure that this is completed for key areas (such as those identified above as priorities for disabled people) by 2030.

Disabled people must also be at the heart of decision-making to make sure that transport projects embed accessibility into services from the start. **Great British Railways must ensure disabled people involved in decision making at every stage – from making sure rail operators have advisory groups of disabled people that feed into decisions made at senior management and board level to ensuring disabled people are strongly represented among staff on the railways and regularly consulting with disabled passengers about the quality of their services.**

By giving disabled people a voice in how the railway system is run, we can ensure everyone can enjoy the profound social and economic benefits of train travel.

— Clive Gilbert, Head of Accessible Transport at Policy Connect and Board Member, NCAT, and Natasha Healey, Associate Director Inclusive Transport Design at WSP and Project Manager at NCAT.



Identifying the issues: a typical passenger journey

This section of the report follows a typical passenger using the railway. In each section, RIA members, railway industry stakeholders, and members of the public with lived experience have provided content to illustrate to identify best practice, areas for improvement, and potential innovations.

Pre-Journey

Journey planning, ticket purchasing, and access to real-time information are essential elements of an inclusive railway system. However, some passengers face barriers at this stage, including inaccessible digital platforms, unclear assistance booking systems, and limited pre-travel support. The Plan for Rail acknowledged that accessible travel begins with information, yet the current system remains fragmented and inconsistent.[66]

> *"Booking a train ticket doesn't start with the booking app or timetable. It starts with: where's the nearest station, how can I get to my destination from it, how long will that take, do the buses run that late, can I take my pram onboard. First and last miles are a very effective psychological barrier"*
>
> **– Destination: Revenue Growth, RIA**[6]

Understanding passenger needs

Some passengers require additional support during the pre-journey phase. Access to information must be available in multiple accessible formats, including Braille, audio, and easy-read documents. Booking assistance should be a seamless process, allowing passengers to request support through a standardised and easy-to-use system. Real-time updates regarding service disruptions, lift and escalator functionality, and step-free route accessibility are essential for journey planning.

Online information and booking

Some passengers rely on digital tools to plan their journeys, but these tools are not always accessible. The ORR found in 2023 that only 62% of UK train operators fully comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines[75]. Websites often lack compatibility with screen readers, and interactive journey planners can be challenging for users with motor impairments. Sometimes they require complex Captchas or multi-factor authentication, making them difficult for neurodivergent users. Passenger Assist booking, a system intended to allow disabled passengers to pre-book assistance, is not integrated into the ticket purchasing process, forcing use of a separate, less accessible system.

There is an urgent need for standardised and accessible digital platforms across all touch points, and this cannot wait for the GBR era.

> *"I tried to check if the lifts were working at my local station, but the website had no information. When I arrived, the lift was out of order, and I had no way to get to the platform."*
>
> **– Disability Rights UK Passenger Interview**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It should be mandated that all operator websites, apps, and third-party ticket retailers shall meet WCAG 2.1 compliance immediately. This incorporates accessibility features such as high-contrast modes, voice assistance, and alternative formats for essential information.[54]

In-person information and booking

Many passengers rely on in-person assistance at stations to purchase tickets. It is often unclear when and if each station is intended to be staffed. Inconsistent staffing levels often mean no help is available. Ticket vending machines have been placed at heights inaccessible to wheelchair users. Some lack tactile feedback, and others require complex touchscreen navigation. Information about the availability walk-up assistance is often not provided, restricting flexibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Fully accessible ticket vending machines must be introduced at all stations requiring ticket-before-travel, without delay. Information channels must make clear which stations are staffed and which are not, and at what time.

Pre-booking assistance

"I have to book my assistance separately after buying my ticket, and sometimes the system doesn't register it properly. I've arrived at stations where no one was expecting me, despite my booking being confirmed."
– Passenger with limited mobility

"I booked assistance two days in advance, but when I arrived at the station, no one was there to help me. Staff told me they hadn't received the request, even though I had an email confirmation."
– Passenger with limited mobility

The requirement for additional assistance will diminish over time as level boarding upgrades progress, but even with full level boarding, some passengers will always require this service. Additional assistance must booked in advance through the Passenger Assist system. The service is, however, fragmented: different operators apply different rules and processes. Whilst there is now a central system – acknowledged as a big step in the right direction – it is app and website-based, which can contribute to digital exclusion.[76]

Passengers are typically required to book assistance at least 2 hours in advance, limiting travel flexibility (though an improvement on the 24 hours required until recently), with the ability to ask for assistance at any staffed station. Some operators fail to notify stations of booked assistance, leading to passengers being left without support upon arrival. Staff shortages can mean assistance is unavailable even when pre-booked. Mid-journey changes of plan are almost impossible to implement. Some operators, like LNER, have led the way with provision for walk-up assists, a great improvement to travel flexibility. This policy should be commended and replicated elsewhere on the network where possible.[77]

41% of disabled passengers have experienced issues with pre-booked assistance not being provided (See 'When things go wrong').[23]

RECOMMENDATIONS:

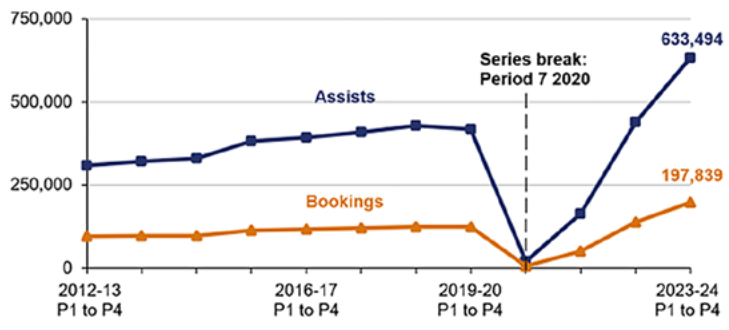
GBR should integrate Passenger Assist booking into the new national ticketing system so that all online, app-based, telephone and in-person touch points can have a single unified process and policy.

Operators should be penalised for failures. Fines should be used to support accessibility improvements.

Where possible, assistance bookings should be made available with shorter notice periods.

Once it was booked, I was told of an app. I've downloaded the app and used it. It has totally turned around my confidence of travelling. I can actually get on and do things now"
– Passenger with physical disability[33]

Number of passenger assists and bookings, Great Britain, rail periods 1 to 4 since 2012



Publication: Rail passenger assists and bookings, Rail periods 1 to 4, 1 April 2023 to 22 July 2023

dataportal.orr.gov.uk

This plot, courtesy of the ORR, illustrated a trend in Passenger Assist bookings and uses.[78] *In 2019, passengers that wanted to book their assistance had to give 24 hours' notice. Since then, the limit has reduced to two hours prior to travel. At the same time, new digital booking methods have been trialled, including web and WhatsApp. The impact of COVID-19 not withstanding, there is a clear upward trend in both metrics, an indicator of significant unmet demand.*

CASE STUDY:

Northern Trains targets improved passenger assistance

Northern Trains says it's vital to increase the pace of change when it comes to delivering reliable passenger assistance. The rail operator has seen sustained growth in passenger assist bookings over the past four years, with levels in 2024/25 32% higher than the previous year and now above pre-COVID levels. With a network covering more than 460 stations, 70% of which have no permanent staff, the challenge has necessitated a different approach. At staffed stations, customers are supported by station staff (and at three stations these are dedicated assistance delivery teams), whereas at unstaffed stations conductors provide assistance once a customer has made their own way to the platform. It is vital that the whole process – from booking to receiving assistance – is seamless.

Northern brought its passenger assistance service in-house in 2021 and its now managed by a dedicated team based at the company's contact centre. Since insourcing the service, Northern has achieved an overall satisfaction score of 84%, and it has plans to bridge the gap through launching a Travel Companion Team. The team will be dedicated to passenger assistance support in real time across the entire Northern estate.

Stations must also be welcoming and provide a seamless travel experience for all customers, including those with additional accessibility needs. In 2023 Northern delivered eight Passenger Assist meeting points at stations, to improve customer experience and provide a reliable way for staff and customers to connect. These meeting points are set to be rolled out to Northern's top 40 most 'in demand' stations for assistance bookings over the coming months with installation planned to be completed by April. Ensuring success for all users, Northern Accessibility User Group (NAUG) has played a pivotal role in defining key aspects of the meeting points, most notably through offering their expertise and lived experience to inform language choice, location guidance and tips for colleagues as well as their advice and ideation on the overall concept.

While the role that staff play makes a real difference to customers, technology also has a role to play in the passenger assistance landscape and is another focus area for Northern. The full roll out of the industry Staff Passenger Assistance app will be a supportive tool for colleagues, as is an improved digital solution for those who wish to 'turn up and go'. Northern has introduced the app early at six stations allowing, for the first time, accurate data capture of 'turn up and go' requests and demonstrating a 76% growth. While Northern does not view the app as a 'silver bullet', the roll out will help with both understanding volumes and resource planning. Where conductors provide assistance, the app will give them the prior notification they need and will reduce the instances of failed assists.

CASE STUDY:

JurnyOn: A gateway to inclusive train journeys

JurnyOn is enabling train travel for individuals with accessibility challenges by leveraging conversational AI, an intelligent recommendation system, emotive icons, text-based guidance, and speech-to-text functionality. Through its intuitive and accessibility-first design, JurnyOn empowers users to independently navigate train networks and book tickets effortlessly.

Simplified Booking Through Conversational AI

JurnyOn allows users to interact naturally using plain language or voice commands to book tickets and plan journeys. For users with visual or cognitive impairments, the app offers step-by-step instructions in accessible formats, ensuring a smooth and stress-free travel planning experience.

Tailored Recommendations for Accessibility

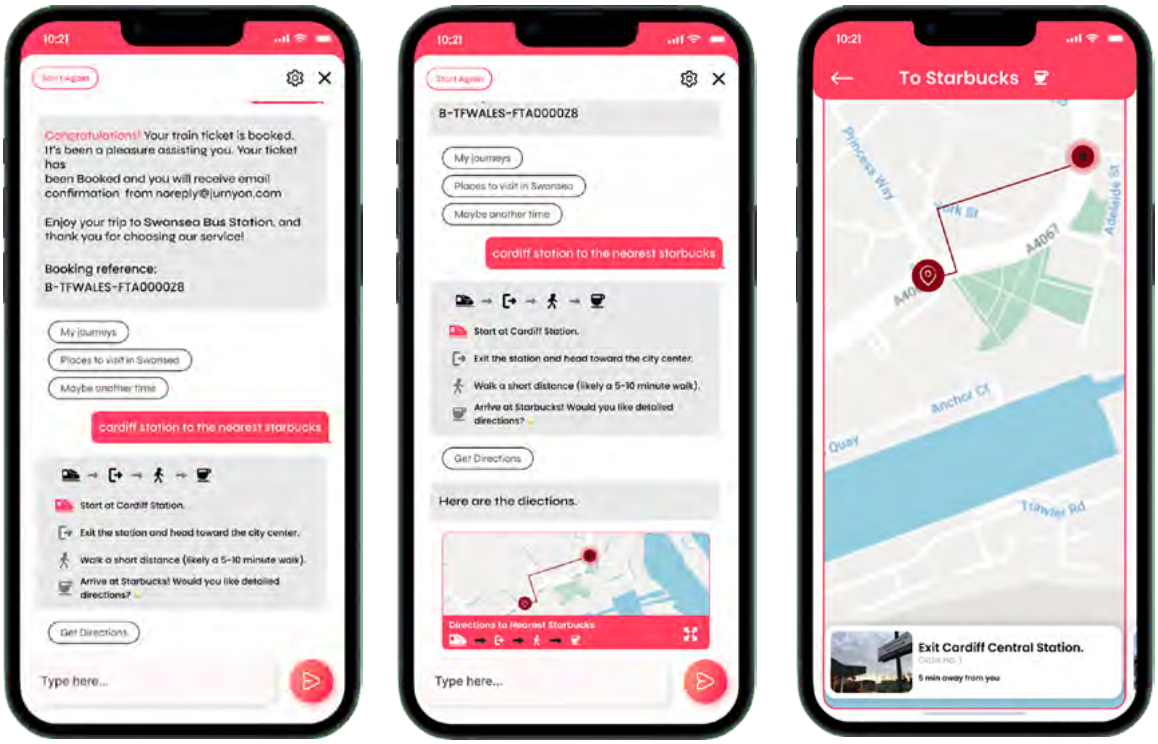
The app enhances travel experiences by offering personalised suggestions, including train journeys, nearby conveniences like coffee shops, accessible routes, and quiet spaces. These recommendations make travel more inclusive and comfortable for individuals with diverse needs.

Clear Visual and Textual Navigation

JurnyOn simplifies navigation with emoticons, visual cues, and accessible text instructions. Intuitive icons guide users through actions like exiting stations, walking to destinations, or reaching points of interest, reducing cognitive overload and improving clarity for those who may find text-heavy instructions overwhelming.

Empowering Inclusive Travel

By blending conversational AI, tailored recommendations, speech-to-text functionality, and clear navigation tools, JurnyOn ensures that all users, regardless of ability, can confidently plan and complete their train journeys. Its design prioritises accessibility, creating an inclusive travel experience for everyone.



Getting to and from the station

"...no-one ends their journey in a railway station, yet they are the only places we sell tickets to. We need to ensure we are part of the wider provision of transport, whether that's full mobility as a service or just simple things like lining up timetables with other modes..."
– Destination: Revenue Growth, RIA[6]

For some, the biggest barrier to using the mainline railway is simply getting to and from a station. A truly equitable transport system must ensure that the entire journey is accessible to all. There has been much recent progress, but gaps remain. Addressing these issues requires innovative technology, investment, and coordinated policy interventions influenced by those with the needs.

Buses

The Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations, 200079, set both a minimum standard, and a legal compliance date for bus adaptations. Under PSVAR, all buses in the UK were required to be fully accessible by 2020, including low-floor entry, wheelchair spaces, visual and audible announcements, and priority seating. Setting a compliance date has forced interventions: meaning they cannot be repeatedly postponed.

Buses are the most used first and last-mile mode of transport for rail passengers. The PSVAR regulations[79] set requirements for accessible buses, but compliance remains inconsistent. Many passengers continue to face barriers such as broken ramps, inconsistent driver assistance, and missing real-time information.

- A 2023 Transport for All report found that 28% of disabled passengers had experienced a ramp issue when boarding a bus in the past year[23].
- In rural areas, accessible bus services remain few or non-existent, meaning that passengers often rely on taxis or community transport to reach rail stations.
- A lack of real-time passenger information makes independent travel more difficult for visually impaired passengers[80]
- TfL lead the way: 98% of London buses now have ramps, next-stop audio and visual announcements. The London bus network provides excellent infill for areas without step-free tube access.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Railway industry should recognise the contribution of buses in providing an accessible transport system. TfL's joined-up provision should be replicated wherever possible in the rest of the country, by providing infill, aligning timetables, information and retail channels, and jointly accepting liability for disruption.

Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs)

Provision varies greatly. Many struggle to find an available wheelchair-accessible vehicle in rural areas. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on taxi drivers to accept wheelchair users and provide reasonable assistance,14 yet enforcement remains weak.

- A 2023 Department for Transport (DfT) review found that in many cities, less than 30% of taxis were wheelchair accessible, despite policies aiming for full coverage.[81]
- Disabled passengers are sometimes overcharged by taxi drivers due to their disability, highlighting the need for better law enforcement.[82]
- Commendably, London's black cabs must meet strict accessibility requirements, including ramps and induction loops. Many local councils do not mandate similar standards for PHVs.[8]

Community Transport and Demand-Responsive Services

Community and demand-responsive services (DRTs) serve as an alternative where other public transport fails to provide accessibility. Services operate on a pre-booked basis and are specifically designed for passengers who struggle with conventional transport. Funding for such services is highly inconsistent, leading to patchy availability across the UK.

- Funding cuts in local authorities have led to a reduction in accessible community transport schemes.[84]
- Cities like Berlin and Stockholm have well-funded demand-responsive services, ensuring that passengers always have an accessible alternative.[85]

Step-Free pavements and safe crossings

Accessibility does not end at the station boundary. Many footpaths leading to stations are inaccessible, with poorly maintained pavements and unsafe crossings, meaning that passengers face barriers before they even reach station entrances. Accessible walking routes to stations are sometimes circuitous and add significant time to journeys.[23] In the Netherlands, station surroundings have fully step-free, well-maintained pathways and clear tactile paving, ensuring accessibility well beyond station boundaries.[86]

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Underspend on flagship projects such as AfA should be diverted to a minor works fund to rapidly fix problems highlighted by local users, and community rail groups, including beyond station boundaries.

Cycling

Accessible cycle infrastructure is rarely considered. Adaptive cycles, handcycles, and tricycles require wider paths and step-free storage areas, but most UK railway stations lack adequate cycle storage for adaptive cycles at stations.[87] London and Cambridge have begun trialling inclusive cycle hubs, designed to support users on a wider range of cycles. 22% of respondents to one survey reported lack of adequate cycle parking as a barrier to rail travel.[23]

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cycling infrastructure and secure parking should be designed and/or modified to accept a wider range of cycling equipment.

Parking and Drop-Off

Private car access to stations, whether to park or drop-off, varies. Though not always practical, best practice is to have sufficient blue-badge parking bays, and designated set-down/pick-up bays as close to the platforms as possible.

In surveys, people have reported that a lack of accessible parking prevented them from driving to the station, or meant they had to walk a significant distance from the car, leading to pain and fatigue. Sometimes this meant respondents had little choice but to hire a taxi to get to the station instead.[23]

The lack of real-time parking availability tracking or widespread ability to pre-book presents a further barrier: there may be sufficient spaces, but without knowledge of such it is unreasonable to expect passengers to use the service. Network Rail Standards specify that as a minimum, 5% of parking needs to be accessible.[12] This draws a clear definition between 'accessible' and 'non-accessible' – perhaps if all spaces were selectable at booking, and a range of sizes provided, the need for such a definition would lapse.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Real-time parking availability tracking should be implemented. Parking pre-booking should be made available through ticket booking platforms.

Sufficient spaces should be provided at all stations to meet all the needs of those who need them. As this will vary from station to station, and users should be consulted on design.

CASE STUDY:

Transport for the North: taking an integrated approach to planning and delivery

To improve accessibility and inclusion, including gendered accessibility, it is imperative that we consider rail as part of an integrated transport system. Some principles that help us achieve that include:

- In the public realm, consistent, bright lighting along paths, parking areas, bus stops, and underpasses is crucial to safety; motion-sensor lighting can play a part but should not be overly relied upon as the lighting of an environment at a distance is important. Harsh, glaring lights can create feelings of vulnerability, so layered lighting should be prioritised where possible according to research done by ARUP, Monash University and Plan International which shows that, "tailored, multi-layered design with considered lighting fosters safer experiences".
- Access pathways to and from stations shouldn't be bordered by dense vegetation or large structures that can provide concealment, and routes should be clearly signposted for wayfinding. Cafes, shops, and residential spaces overlooking paths minimise 'dead zones' (spaces with little or no human activity), alongside visible CCTV, making spaces feel safer by facilitating gatherings of people.
- Aligned timetables and frequent services reduces long waiting times, therefore reducing potentially isolated waiting times.
- Public art and the beautification of spaces can reduce anti-social behaviour and therefore potential violence and harassment. Researchers from the University of Edinburgh, for example, found that green space was a consistent predictor of reduced violent and property crime risk.
- Engaging with Community Rail partners can help local placemaking, building a community and sense of belonging, and projecting that feeling of welcome outwards.

CASE STUDY:

Accessible digital navigation to, and through, the station with Waymap

Current navigation systems work outdoors for some people but work indoors for no one. Built using the principle of 'nothing about us without us', Waymap's mass market, awarding winning app is the world's most accurate and inclusive navigation system that works seamlessly outdoors and indoors making it possible for people to navigate using step by step and turn by turn instructions to get from their home to their seat in the theatre or to the cheese counter in a supermarket. Using AI and data fusion algorithms, the Waymap app captures information from the phone's IMUs to calculate your precise location and to compute the route to your destination that meets your specific requirements, e.g. step free access. Using patented map matching techniques, the Waymap app has a location accuracy of up to one metre and a heading accuracy of up to 10 degrees. It requires no infrastructure – just an accurate map of the station or facility. The basic navigation system is available even if the phone is on airplane mode but, when connected to the internet, Waymap will recalculate a route in real time based on data feeds such as GTFS etc. Unlike other available solutions, the Waymap app will work even if you put the phone in your pocket or answer a phone call or text. There is no restriction on how you use your phone.

waymap

Waymap is currently available in 130 locations across the world – from Washington DC (where the entire WMATA transit system is available on the app store) to Singapore, Madrid, Brisbane, Liverpool and Birmingham. A survey conducted by Waymap of disabled passengers using the LA Metro suggests that up to 10% of disabled passengers would prefer to use fixed route transit rather than specialist paratransit if a solution such as Waymap was available. This suggests that major cost savings and carbon emission reductions could accrue to transport agencies if they provide Waymap to their customers.

Light rail and metro

Light rail and metro's work together to form the backbone of the transportation system in urban centres. The challenges faced are very different to rural routes. Whilst there is some excellent practice in new-build networks, physical accessibility remains inconsistent in older systems. Information provision and ticketing integration also vary. For example:

- Manchester Metrolink, Nottingham Express Transit, and Sheffield Supertram are entirely step-free, with level boarding and designated wheelchair spaces throughout.
- London's Docklands Light Railway (DLR) provides 100% step-free access and ticketing inherits all of the accessibility features of the oyster network.
- London Underground remains only 33% step -free.[88] Good, clear information is provided, and strategy has been to infill areas lacking access by offering excellent accessible bus provision.[89]
- Glasgow Subway still has significant accessibility gaps, with some stations lacking step-free access or real-time accessibility information.90
- Nexus (Newcastle) offers level access, ramps or lifts at all stations, but adds "the platform gap and step dimensions do vary at each station and may cause problems for some unassisted wheelchair users.[91]

RECOMMENDATIONS:

TfL's whole-system approach to accessibility and information provision, and Nexus's efforts to make one of the world's oldest metro's entirely step-free should both be regarded as best practice. Both stem from a stable vision, and an alignment of funding with decision-making authority. This should be replicated nationwide.

At the station*

Mainline station provisions remain inconsistent. However, the information available about those provisions is improving at rapid pace. This benefits both the industry – through helping to better target the interventions and improvements necessary – and the passenger – by helping them make decisions about how they can travel.

Several recent accessibility reviews have presented different statistics on the exact number of stations having, or lacking, certain features. The Plan for Rail instigated a full stations accessibility review to overcome this lack of data.[66] However, broad consensus is that many stations fall short of meeting full accessibility expectations. Sources quote differing rates of improvement, with a network-wide step-free date projected between 2080 and 2140.

In 2023, Network Rail was passed the largest data set ever collected on station accessibility. The data set was collected by the Department for Transport between 2021 and 2023 and involved full and comprehensive accessibility audits of every station in the country. Hundreds of questions were asked at each station and millions of data points were collected, 95% of which had not been collected before.

Transport for the North and the Rail North Committee drive improvements in station accessibility and inclusion

At Transport for the North (TfN), the Rail North Committee – which is made up of the region's political leaders – have been championing work to improve station accessibility because about half of the region's stations do not enjoy step-free access to all parts of the station. The work has considered not just physical impairments, but also how we make the railway more inclusive. TfN's research on transport-related social exclusion has indicated that women feel significantly less safe using public transport than men, so improvements to safety would enhance inclusivity. In practice, this includes investment in CCTV security and lighting in and around stations. Working closely with local authorities, Train Operating Companies and the rail industry, TfN's work provides evidence and advice to inform their plans and investment to enable more people and communities to use the North's railway network to access opportunities and services.

*Boarding the train does happen in the station, but we have chosen to explore this in the 'Boarding and on train' section.

Access for All – Providing step-free access

The main funding source for mainline station upgrades is the Access for All (AfA) programme, part of the Railways for All strategy.[8] Launched in 2006, by the end of 2019, a total of £520 million had been invested into the programme with over 215 stations now providing step-free 8access. Smaller-scale improvements have also been implemented at a further 1,000 stations.

However, through CP6 the programme, by Network Rail's own admission, is failing to deliver. In the last control period, £99m of cash that was earmarked for improvements was returned to treasury unspent due to project and bureaucratic delays, triggering an efficiency investigation.[70]

Any improvements to physical access only benefit passengers if human resources surrounding them are sufficient. At unmanned stations, improvements to physical access are vital, as is clear and practical information around those improvements.

Transport for All also criticise the slow progress, stating that over 40% of UK railway stations remain inaccessible.[23] The key issue highlighted is that the funding is committed, but is not being used efficiently. In many cases, planned upgrades have been delayed by red tape, poor project management, or disputes over funding priorities.

These organisations, and others, call for a legally binding deadline for making all major railway stations step-free, suggesting that the government should enforce a time-limited transition plan and arguing that accessibility must become a non-negotiable infrastructure standard, rather than an optional upgrade.

> *"It is clear that Access for All has been a failure mainly because it has not seen a dedicated, centrally controlled delivery team working on it – there is only peripheral interest in accessibility from the industry's leadership. It's time for such matters to change. There needs to be a complete culture change at the DfT and Network Rail around accessibility which too often is viewed as a gift and not as a need."*
>
> **– Disability Rights UK**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

AfA should be overhauled, placed into its own dedicated unit, with delivery and funding authority. AfA Fund should not be dependent upon 5-year control periods; there should be no mechanism for returning funds.

AfA works should be delivered as a rolling programme, rather than on a project-by-project basis.

AfA should immediately embrace private sector innovations, such as those in the case studies presented in this report, to deliver more for less, and sooner.

It is imperative that data sets like that collected by the Department for Transport between 2021 and 2023 are kept up to date by Station Facility Owners (SFOs) to realise their full value.

Real-time information, and navigation through the station

Passengers cite lift and escalator reliability as major concern, as unplanned outages often leave passengers stranded with no immediate alternative.[92] Real-time status updates are a step in the right direction, though they were rarely available in journey planners until recent initiatives by Network Rail's R&D Programme. TfL provide a network-wide accessibility map alongside an interactive journey planner to help users plot routes for particular needs.[93] This is excellent practice, though some users have noted that station staff are helpful but not always knowledgeable.

Network Rail have demonstrated the value of providing open data to 3rd party developers:

Access to clear and real-time information is critical to ensuring they can navigate stations independently. Effective station information systems should include visual displays, audio announcements, tactile wayfinding, and digital accessibility tools.

> *"Previous open source data releases have quickly led to in app and web developers using the information to create simple apps that hugely help passengers when planning journeys. This latest development, delivered through our research and development programme, uses monitoring devices on lifts and escalators to create give live information on the equipment to third parties through an open data source. This allows the third parties, such as web and app developers, to create travel planner apps to provide live lift and escalator availability information to passengers."*
>
> **– Network Rail's Access for All update 2020**[94]

The rollout of digital signage and passenger information displays has been inconsistent. While larger stations have comprehensive digital displays, smaller stations often lack reliable information systems, forcing passengers to rely on station staff or smartphone applications.

Ticket barriers can present a challenge, particularly for wheelchair users and those with guide dogs. Standard barriers are often too narrow, requiring passengers to use a manual gate, which must be operated by staff, leading to delays and confusion.

The introduction of British Sign Language (BSL) departure boards has improved accessibility for Deaf passengers. While automated audio announcements are common in large stations, many smaller or unstaffed stations fail to provide consistent auditory information, impacting blind and visually impaired passengers. Digital wayfinding is an area of rapid development, with several solutions having helped countless passengers with sensory needs self-navigate through stations. However, their rollout has been inconsistent.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Accurate and timely information provision is critical. Key information should be provided in accessible formats.

Provision at all stations should be standardised and consistent so that passengers know what to expect.

Low-cost digital innovations can offer a high cost/benefit ratio and rapid scalability, therefore their rollout should be accelerated across the network.

Station operators should open up more data to 3rd parties to enable more features and better integration.

CASE STUDY:

Laing O'Rourke and KONE's 'Lift in a box' delivers massive time and cost savings for AfA adaptations

We must accommodate every railway user who has the right to access public infrastructure. However, the reality of the current station estate means that upgrades are difficult, and many have to wait many years for a real improvement. The current infrastructure is complex, the size of the railway network and often age drives variability and there is a bewildering number of different lift designs and configurations currently in use across UK stations and crossings. This fragmented approach is inefficient and outdated. It's time to rethink lift installation and provide a better solution.

Lifts are traditionally constructed piece-by-piece off the station platform. The logistics involved in keeping the station operating safely are challenging. The build is time-consuming with one activity following another. Workers and public are put at risk due to the hazards associated with complex storage and temporary works arrangements.

LOR and KONE have developed a solution to address these issues. Called 'Lift in a Box' (LiaB), the entire lift tower inclusive of frame, cladding and lift equipment is installed in one crane lift. The supporting foundation is also designed to install as a sub-assembly. At site the LiaB elements are joined, power connected, and the lift commissioned with minimal disruption to station operations. Where required, a bridge can be supported by the lift tower.

Standardisation is important for economy and speed of delivery. The LiaB concept is to "Customise the Visible; Standardise the Invisible" – CVSI. A wide palette of cladding finishes is available. Both the frame and lift equipment are pre-qualified to rail sector design criteria, allowing us to standardise elements of the design and enable rapid redeployment of the structure which ensuring architectural adaptability tailored to the specific requirements of each unique station.

KONE lifts are ideal for LiaB due to their speed, efficiency, and safety. They automate operations, reduce manual intervention, and streamline project timelines. KONE's lifts are cost-effective, environmentally friendly, with a global track record. Four designs from the MonoSpace-700 series have been selected to ensure ongoing availability across the UK. KONE have recently been awarded a place on the Lifts and Escalators Renewals and Replacements Framework therefore having preapproval of lift contractor status across Network Rail portfolio.

Disruption at site for a traditional lift install is circa 120 days. For LiaB this reduces to circa 20 days, an approximately 80% reduction. Lead-time (order to completion) is comparable to traditional, as are costs. With most of the work done offsite, there are safety and quality improvements. Overall project certainty is improved, and risk significantly reduced. Environmentally, the LiaB provides a 12% improvement in embodied carbon.

In summary, the LiaB is a faster, smarter, and less disruptive solution for lift installation within the rail network. By adopting the CVSI approach, architectural aspirations can be satisfied whilst benefitting the offsite safety and quality gains that standardisation enables.

A full-scale demonstration of the technology is due to be installed at Porterbrook's Long Marston Rail Innovation Centre, for the Rail Live event on 18th to 19th June 2025.

IMAGES COURTESY OF LAING O'ROURKE

CASE STUDY:

L.B. Foster is bringing British Sign Language to the UK Railway

The facts:

- People who are born deaf have significantly different life experiences to those people who acquire deafness at a later stage in their life – they are culturally deaf.
- Many BSL users are not comfortable with written English as they are unable to involve/use phonics, in the UK many older generations that were born deaf never learn to read, due to the poor education, with new educational technics current generations are learning to read but most only reach a reading age of 11-12.
- BSL was first recognised as an official minority language in 2003 and is now officially the 4th UK Language. 151,000 Deaf people use sign language as their preferred language.
- Deaf passengers with reading difficulty do not have equal access to information when arriving at the station. Platform alterations, delays, cancellations and special notices are often missed by Deaf passengers, as these are often announced via the PA before appearing on screens.

Transforming Travel for the d/Deaf Community: LB Foster's Groundbreaking Initiatives.

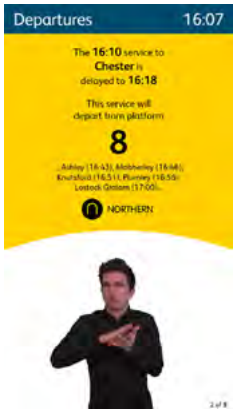
In 2020, LB Foster embarked on a mission to enhance accessibility for the d/Deaf Community. Our journey began at London Euston Station, where we introduced British Sign Language (BSL) messages on screens, a pioneering step that received widespread acclaim.

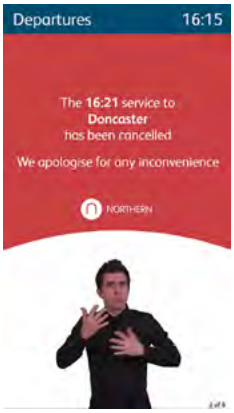
Building on this success, LB Foster partnered with TransPennine Express to launch a world-first initiative: **Inform BSL Departures**. This innovative system translates live train movement data into BSL videos, providing real-time updates on train departures, delays, cancellations, platform changes, and bus replacements. Rolled out across all TPE stations in 2022, this initiative has revolutionised the travel experience for d/Deaf passengers, ensuring they stay informed and connected.

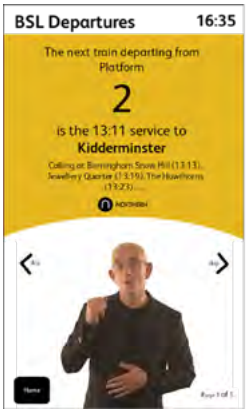
Following this triumph, LB Foster and Network Rail extended Inform BSL Departures to all Network Rail-managed stations. Notably, dedicated 75" screens at Glasgow and Edinburgh stations now feature these updates, significantly improving the travel experience for the d/Deaf Community. This groundbreaking initiative has not only made a tangible difference in people's lives but also trended on social media for months, highlighting its impact and success.

And we're just getting started! LB Foster is on a mission to bring BSL Departures to even more stations. We're exploring new screens, ways to display BSL Departures and working on delivering these updates directly to the d/Deaf Community.

But that's not all! We're expanding our efforts to support the Visually Impaired and Blind Communities. Soon, they will receive the same real-time train journey information as everyone else.







CASE STUDY:

Virtual Tour Experts are enabling station navigation

In response to a call from leading Train Operating Companies (TOCs), The Virtual Tour Experts developed immersive virtual tours for over 40 rail stations nationwide. The challenge was to create an accessible and immersive 360˚ experience for commuters, especially those with visual, hearing, movement, and mental health disabilities. The solution enhanced the customer experience while being cost-effective, fast to deliver, flexible, and not disruptive to daily operations.

The Process:

Working alongside each TOC, accessibility teams rigorously user-tested the product. The overwhelmingly positive response led to the continued rollout of more station tours. One notable addition was adding British Sign Language as a language option.

The project continues to evolve with upcoming features including day/night views, ambient sounds, and integrated journey planning. A new widget will also identify the platform for upcoming journeys.

The product's flexibility allows seamless updates, such as adding notifications in key areas and reshooting station sections when needed. This photo-realistic representation of the platform has resonated with users and is enhanced by the following unique features:

Main Features:

High-quality obstruction-free imagery | Route planner | Information hotspots | Accessibility widget | Explainer videos | Real-time updates | Day/night mode | Ambient sounds | Slope angle measurements | BSL integration | Multi-lingual options | Interactive maps | Talking head narration

"Top-notch photography, bespoke accessibility features, and a solid content management system put them above and ahead of other companies tendering for this contract."

– Fran, Greater Anglia Train Stations

The Results:

These virtual tours increase confidence in using transport systems, reduce the need for assistance, and enhance overall user experience leading to customer satisfaction. The positive audience engagement is reflected in statistics, with **450,197 scene views, 35,312 visitors,3,079 hours spent on tours and an average of 11 scenes viewed for 5 minutes per session.**

In a survey where over 300 train users tested the tour, 92% found the tour easy to navigate and 82% said the tour would increase their confidence to travel.

"We have been able to provide our customers with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with our stations ahead of travelling, helping to ease anxiety and build confidence in rail."

– Ariane, East Midlands Railway

Travellers are helped to safely navigate stations and select appropriate routes with ease. This immersive experience with the integration of other relevant media including photos, videos, and audio increases passenger confidence.

Following the success of these tours, more TOCs are using the product, standardising the experience across stations and enhancing accessibility for all users. The ultimate goal is to offer these experiences at the start and end of all user journeys.

CASE STUDY:

Octavius Infrastructure's experience ensures Access for All success

Octavius have designed and installed over thirty AfA rail station upgrades and currently have £65m of AfA projects in various stages of delivery. From this experience they understand the critical elements to guarantee success in the delivery of Access for All and Step Free Access (SfA) projects. Octavius has applied this learning to continuously improve, adopting the very best practice into each new design.

Solutions should minimise disruption to passengers, neighbouring residents and businesses, take due cognisance of the conservation of the heritage of the stations, local ecology and environment.

Critical AfA Success Factors:

Clear and concise stakeholder agreements – developing transparent agreements to align expectations and responsibilities. Stakeholders that play no part in the AfA project funding can often have substantial influence on project costs and programme both during feasibility development and implementation.

Identifying and developing the minimum viable product – with all major project elements there is a range of options that can significantly impact project value. For example, lift selection, choices of cladding, finishes and ground conditions, and existing safety critical services may dictate that a longer bridge span, or complex foundation will be more cost effective than undertaking complex protection and diversion measures.

Innovation to improve quality, cost and programme – founded in the adoption of modern methods of construction. Solutions that simplify methodologies, lever the benefits of modular design, the use of standardise components and digital technologies play a

IMAGES COURTESY OF OCTAVIUS INFRASTRUCTURE

significant role in achieving the very best most viable solutions.

Feasible designs – creating practical and achievable designs tailored to project constraints. Crucial here is being absolutely clear what the major cost drivers are. Typically, these cost drivers have a greater influence on the best solution than what might be considered the simplest and cheapest design at the outset.

Certainty of project scope – clearly defining project boundaries to ensure alignment and focus. Instructing scope changes during mobilisation, detailing, planning and implementation will almost certainly increase project risks and costs and delay the programme.

Best value to meet efficiency targets – balancing cost, quality and time to maximise project efficiency. Get this right and you have a solution that performs to meet the output specification for the most cost-effective price that can be completed in the optimum time.

Right first-time delivery – ensuring accurate execution to avoid rework and delays. This means people having the right information, in a timely manner, the right level of skilled resources, clarity and clear briefing of safe methodologies, followed up with effective test, inspection and handover plans.

Octavius Rail Operations Director Matt Broxholme summarises:

"Our experience has given us a rich source of learning and knowledge that allows us to continually improve, to remove risk and provide certainty of outcomes for our customers.

No two AfA projects are the same and the construction phase, once the scope is finalised, is often the easiest. Positively managing the complex and different expectations of funders, local stakeholders, authorities and operators early in the process is essential.

An AfA project delivered 10 years ago is very different from the requirements demanded now. An AfA project now demands more design stage deliverables, in our early projects the requirement would be significantly less, this change adds resource, time and cost into the process.

Octavius has a vast depth of knowledge and learning. This gives us a unique and specialist understanding of the drivers of cost, risk and certainty. Key process initiatives such as "Design to Cost" are introduced as we refine our own AfA Productivity Model to improve AfA programme performance through Control Period 7."

CASE STUDY:

Briteyellow's Briteway App enhances public transport experience

Introduction: The Briteway app, developed by Briteyellow, has demonstrated significant potential to enhance accessibility to the public transport experience. Based on comprehensive user feedback, the app offers innovative features that can greatly benefit both disabled passengers and transport authorities. The app:

Has high user engagement:

- **60% of disabled passengers** are likely to use the app for journey exploration and station navigation, indicating strong user interest and engagement.

Has priority features:

- **Virtual tour of station:** Ranked as the most important feature by testers, this can help passengers familiarise themselves with station layouts, reducing confusion and improving flow.
- **Augmented reality (AR):** Enhances the navigation experience, making it easier for users to find their way.
- **Request help & Chat with staff:** Provides immediate assistance, improving passenger safety and satisfaction.

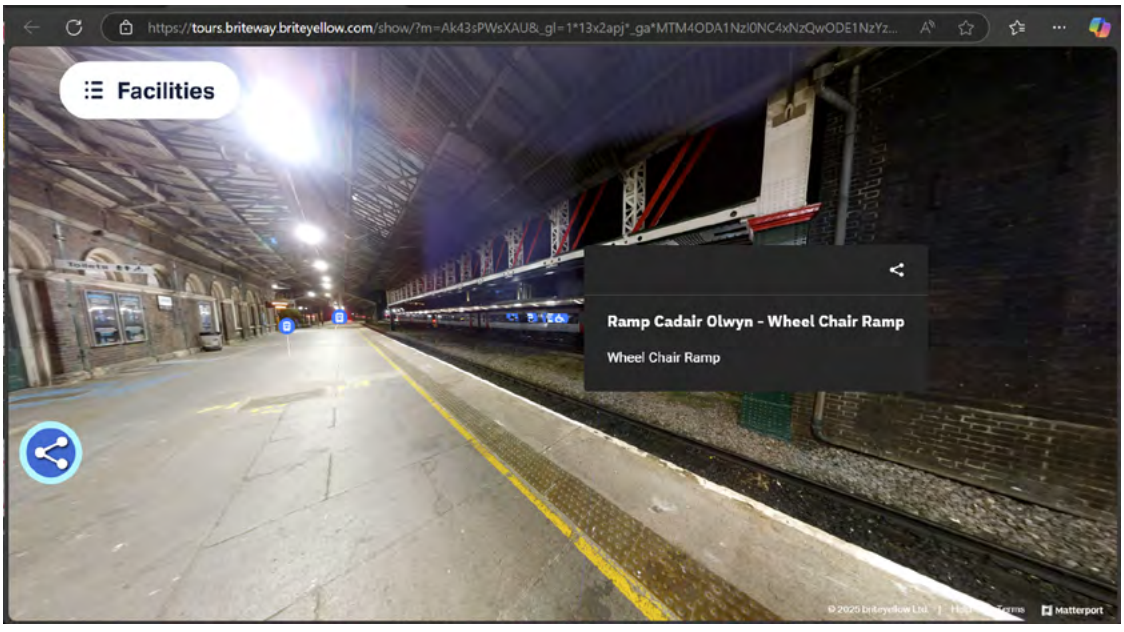
Has positive user feedback from the Connected Places report:

- **High value in navigation:** Especially useful in unfamiliar or large stations, the app can significantly reduce the stress and time associated with navigating complex transport hubs.
- **Expanded utility:** The app's usefulness extends to smaller stations and for planning journeys and meeting points, making it a versatile tool for all types of stations.
- **User recommendations:** Suggestions for tutorials and expanding features to include other destinations highlight the app's potential for broader applications.

Participant likes:

- **Interactive 3D navigation & virtual tours:** These features are highly appreciated for their clarity and ease of use.
- **Clear audio cues & customisation options:** Enhance accessibility and user experience.
- **Integration with customer help desks:** Simplifies passenger assistance, with potential applications beyond rail stations, such as in airports and bus terminals.

The Briteyellow app can significantly improve the accessibility of the public transport experience, making it more user-friendly and efficient. By adopting this technology, the operators can enhance satisfaction and promote the use of public transport for the disabled. This aligns with broader goals of improving urban mobility and sustainability.



CASE STUDY:

GoodMaps Revolutionises Accessible Navigation in UK Rail

GoodMaps provides an industry-leading indoor mapping and navigation solution that transforms how people experience indoor spaces, particularly railway stations. Their proprietary Visual Positioning System (VPS) delivers precise indoor navigation with 25cm accuracy 68% of the time and less than 1m accuracy 100% of the time.

Product Description

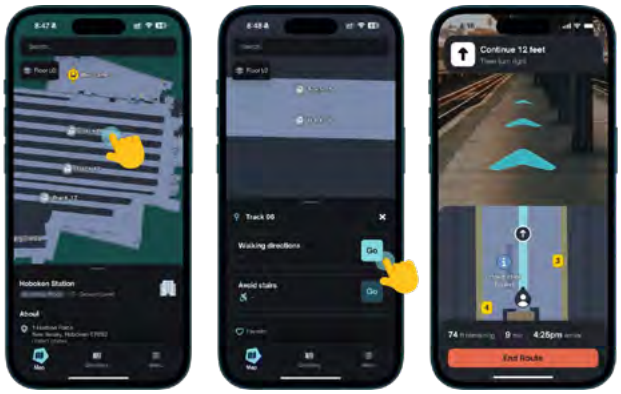
GoodMaps' wayfinding technology enables passengers to navigate complex railway stations independently through a smartphone app. The system works through a sophisticated process that begins with professional LiDAR and visual capture surveys of stations. This data is then processed through advanced machine learning algorithms to create detailed digital maps with visual positioning capabilities.

The patented VPS technology allows users' smartphones to compare low-resolution frames from their camera against the original survey visuals, precisely determining their location within the environment. This infrastructure-free approach requires no beacons, QR codes, or additional hardware installations.

GoodMaps Web, their latest evolution, extends this functionality to operators' websites, apps, and station digital assets like kiosks and podiums. This dramatically supports pre-planning aspects of wayfinding and allows users who don't need full navigation capabilities to avoid downloading the native app. Front-line staff can more effectively assist passengers by visually showing destinations and generating QR codes for instant handoff – letting passengers scan displayed routes that launch the GoodMaps app pre-programmed with their destination.

The GoodMaps platform embodies universal access principles, supporting not just one group of disabled passengers but creating a truly inclusive experience for everyone, with options for blind and low vision users, deaf users, mobility-impaired traveller's, and those with cognitive differences.

GoodMaps



UK Rail Implementation

Network Rail has partnered with GoodMaps to provide inclusive digital wayfinding at all nineteen of their mainline stations. The partnership began with a pilot at four North West & Central stations in 2023, which facilitated approximately 7,000 routes. Following this success, GoodMaps was deployed across all nineteen mainline stations in Q2 2024.

The system has been implemented by multiple UK rail operators including Avanti, C2C, KAM Metrolink, LNER, LNWR, Network Rail, Northern, TFGM, TransPennine Express, and WMR. Notably, the complete GoodMaps platform is backward compatible, meaning early adopters like TransPennine Express benefit from the same features as recent subscribers like C2C and LNER.

Within the first weeks of launch across Network Rail's nineteen mainline stations – with no promotion – the GoodMaps app enabled over 2,000 journeys (approximately 150 weekly requests). The technology creates a seamless experience for passengers throughout their entire journey, embodying the principle that consistency across accessibility services is critical for all travellers.

'After assessing the options on the market, the industry has begun adopting Goodmaps as their accessible wayfinding solution of choice because it aligns with the core values we required from such a system. It is infrastructure free, it can be used for first and final mile travel, it is in use in other venues away from rail, it could be used by anyone, and wasn't a specific accessibility product for one demographic' **– Network Rail**

Boarding and on-train

Significant strides have been made in designing trains that cater to all passengers, but gaps remain in level boarding, the function of reservation systems, and provision of onboard facilities. Physical features are largely dictated by the age and design of rolling stock, meaning the result is another accessibility "postcode lottery".

Boarding and alighting the train

> *"I share a sense of frustration with everyone who just wants to be able to get on and off a train and interact with friends, get to work and be part of society."*
>
> **– Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE, Life Peer and former Paralympic Athlete**[42]

Boarding and alighting train is one of the most inconsistent and challenging aspects of rail travel. Many stations across the UK still require passengers to rely on manual boarding ramps. According to the ORR, 34% of disabled passengers reported difficulty boarding in 2023, due in part to gaps between the platform and the train.[33] There are four categories of train boarding experience, influenced by each passenger's needs:

1. I can board and alight the train without assistance, throughout the whole length of the train. Level boarding throughout each train is one of the most requested accessibility features.[42] The complexity of mainline network operations, including mixed fleets, add complexity to its timely delivery, however there is no doubt that it should be the standard every operator and station aims for. Overseas networks which have implemented level boarding have seen ridership increase. Some operators have led the way – Heathrow Express, Greater Anglia, Merseyrail and Greater Anglia, amongst others.

2. I can board and alight the train without assistance, but only at certain platform locations. This interim measure has enabled unassisted travel on the tube, for example, but limits passengers of reduced mobility to certain parts of the train.

3. I can board and alight the train but only with staff assistance. The majority of longer distance services, including rolling stock still being manufactured to this day and scheduled to me manufactured for future services, e.g. HS2, require a Passenger Assistance booking – a staff member uses a fold-out ramp to facilitate access. Passenger Assistance booking issues are covered elsewhere.

4. I am completely unable to board the train. Thankfully, there are relatively few instances where this is now the case as rolling stock has been retired.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Unassisted boarding throughout the length of the train should be the target for the whole industry. This is best delivered by level boarding. A mandatory compliance date may help focus effort and justify investment.

Level boarding should be a high priority requirement for any new rolling stock purchases or station alterations.

On-train facilities and layout

The National Technical Specification Notice (NTSN) for Persons with Reduced Mobility set out the absolute minimum requirements for rolling stock accessibility, but implementation across the fleet remains inconsistent.[69] In any case, provisions should be seen as a minimum compliance standard, not a target to aim for.

Once on board, accessible seating and wheelchair spaces must accommodate passengers with reduced mobility. The NTSN requires at least two wheelchair spaces per train. However, 48% of wheelchair users struggled to find an available space, with many trains failing to enforce priority seating policies.[23] Other common issues include:

- Wheelchair spaces being used for luggage due to the carriage design not having adequate storage provision.
- Doors and aisles too narrow to adequately manoeuvre.
- Frequent siting of the wheelchair spaces next to toilets.
- Insufficient space around the wheelchair user for companions.
- A lack of quiet or confined space for neurodivergent travellers.
- An inability for those with additional needs to enjoy the features that others do, e.g. buffet cars.

Many UK trains are equipped with accessible toilets, but their availability and functionality is unreliable. 25% of accessible toilets on UK trains are often locked or out of service, leaving passengers without essential facilities. Reports from passengers highlight frequent issues with blocked doors, inadequate space for mobility aids, unreliable emergency call buttons, and a lack of keys to facilities on platforms.[11, 33] Implementing digital tracking for accessible toilets and ensuring maintenance teams are alerted when facilities become unavailable is vital.

On-train information provision

Fixed information provision includes marking of priority seating and help points, as well as route maps, carriage and seat numbers etc. This information needs to be clear, concise and provided in accessible forms wherever possible, for example tactile or large-font. The rolling stock fleet is gradually being brought up to recent standards. Passenger feedback has described these standards as adequate to good.

Real-time communications, such as station stops, platform alterations or service disruptions, often fall short of best practice. Many trains still lack clear visual and auditory announcements, which are essential for Deaf and visually impaired passengers. Often, passengers do not know what provision will be available on a given train, further adding to confusion and delay.

As highlighted in the Station section, it is vital that information is provided in as many accessible formats as possible, for example BSL and hearing-loop integration. This must include live communication with staff – in 2024 the ORR found that 42% of disabled passengers experienced difficulties contacting train staff for assistance mid-journey.[11]

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Adopt an "Accessibility First" approach, where all new and refurbished rolling stock is designed from the outset to be fully accessible and inclusive.

All decisions related to carriage layout and operation should adhere to the 'nothing about us without us' principle. Inclusive representation in design decisions should be mandated.

Accurate and timely information provision is critical. Key information should be provided in accessible formats.

Provision on all rolling stock should be standardised and consistent so that passengers know what to expect.

CASE STUDY:

Stadler deploy sliding-step technology to ensure level boarding for Merseyrail and Greater Anglia

STADLER

Overview

Stadler makes a wide range of rolling stock for countries around the world, with vastly differing networks, terrains and passenger needs. What many of their trains have in common is the sliding step technology deployed. This makes getting on and off trains much easier for all passengers, particularly for wheelchair users and people with disabilities, as well as for those with push-chairs, luggage, or bikes, transforming the customer experience overall.

Improved passenger flow reduces dwell time, streamlining journeys and making rail travel more efficient. The sliding step featured on Stadler trains meets the platform edge, enhances access for passengers and marks the end to 'mind the gap'. It means that wheelchair users and people with limited mobility can get on and off at most stations without the use of ramps, enabling them to enjoy greater personal independence when travelling by train.

Background

For many years, trains operating in the UK have featured high flooring and a fixed step at doorways of the same height. Although this reduces the space between the train and the platform edge, there is still usually a gap, so passengers have to step up and down carefully when getting on and off. Many UK networks were developed in the Victorian era, when stations were not built to a standard template. Platforms were constructed on a curve, making the gap even bigger. This exacerbates the safety risks, increasing the chances of trips and injuries.

However, Stadler's sliding step sensor equipment is designed to work with varying platform heights that fall within a defined scope, specified by Network Rail.

Infra-red sensors determine the distance between the edge of the train and the edge of the platform, with the sliding step retracting to close the gap, so facilitating seamless boarding. This technology works best in conjunction with infrastructure improvements. In partnership with Network Rail, Merseytravel, Stadler's client for the trains for the Liverpool City Region, undertook a programme of work to upgrade platforms on the Merseyrail network, adapting them to make unassisted access easier. This combination of sliding step technology and infrastructure work is the most effective way of developing step-free access for the benefit of all passengers, especially those with reduced mobility. The RSSB working group pronounced the work that Merseytravel and Network Rail conducted as 'industry-leading'.

Stadler's expertise in this area

While Stadler does not 'own' the technology, it has considerable experience in the field of step-free technology, having already supplied trains with this feature for many other networks in Europe and the US. Several of these projects presented considerable technical challenges, with stations built on curved track. In some cases, the curvature feature high levels of cant. However, thanks to the integrated control of the entire entrance system, including the door and the retractable step, Stadler was able to overcome such obstacles, ensuring safety and reliability. We were the first rail builder to introduce trains with this ground-breaking technology in the UK.

CASE STUDY:

PriestmanGoode say rail's accessibility and inclusivity is far ahead of aviation

PriestmanGoode.

Rail's position as the most sustainable future transport option needs little explanation. The travelling public don't need convincing on benefits such as energy efficiency, lower emissions or ability to reduce road congestion. But encouraging passengers to make the shift towards a cleaner alternative requires further improvement to accessibility on trains. All passengers, including those with limited mobility, seniors, and individuals with hidden disabilities should be able to travel independently, comfortably and in a way that's personalised to their needs.

On accessibility, rail is actually further ahead than aviation. PriestmanGoode has worked for over 12 years to bring wheelchair access to aircraft interiors and a major milestone in that design development is very close to opening long distance airline travel for those who have been excluded or face barriers.

In the UK, many rail accessibility factors are considered and guided by law, including the Equality Act 2010, the Railways (Access) Regulations 2010 and European Union regulations that were retained, such as the European Accessibility Act. These include platform-level boarding to eliminate steps or ramps, ensuring wide doors and aisles for easy movement of mobility devices, and providing designated spaces for wheelchairs and mobility devices. Marking of priority seating for seniors and disabled passengers, and to enhance convenience,

Wheelchair-accessible lavatory designed for the VIA Rail Canada New Corridor fleet

The whole interior of the new VIA Rail fleet is wheelchair accessible due to wider aisles.

multimodal signage with visual and auditory announcements, as well as tactile maps, should ensure passengers can easily navigate stations and trains. Accessible toilets and facilities equipped with grab bars and emergency alarms are another essential on longer distance trains. Accessible waiting areas and integration with other modes of transport such as buses are also part of the framework.

However, despite all of the above the experience feels inconsistent, often broken and embarrassing for those who need support. Who would choose to be sat in isolation next to the entrance or near to the toilet? There are many other solutions within reach and investment in design will enable them.

As well as a new approach to layouts and physical design, we see AI as a means of planning for the journey and raising awareness of the space and touchpoints, prior to booking and hopefully reducing any anxiety that might discourage a journey. Systems like hearing loops assist passengers with hearing impairments, while haptics, voice-activated apps and screen readers are developed and ready to help visually impaired individuals.

As part of the 200 year anniversary of the modern railway isn't it time the UK embraces new possibilities for accessibility and sets benchmarks for the world to ensure the rail experience is truly equitable and appealing to all?

CASE STUDY:

Enabling better accessibility and inclusivity through rolling stock: reflections from Daisy Chapman Chamberlain at Transport for the North

The need for rolling stock design that supports gendered accessibility emerges. Many of the principles applied to station approach and interior design also apply here, as well as some new ones, including:

- Carriages should be designed with open layouts and clear sightlines, minimising hidden or secluded spaces, e.g. Merseyrail's 777 fleet.
- Materials, colours, CCTV, and lighting all play an important accessibility role – so these need to be appropriately considered, and with advice from those with lived experiences
- Onboard information provision should be in real-time to enable detailed journey planning and connections.
- Features of the rolling stock should be clearly marked such as help buttons, and designated family zones could be considered (such as those suggested by the Campaign for Family Friendly Trains).
- As in stations, onboard staff should be as visible as possible, and easily locatable (e.g. passing through the service often).
- Campaigns and anti-harassment information in stations should extend to onboard rolling stock.
- Reporting apps such as Railway Guardian are essential, as well as the 61016 text line. Reporting should be simple, link separate agencies where needed, and always provide onward assistance for victims.
- Technology is not a panacea; avoiding digital exclusion and prioritising the role of staff remains vital.
- Staff safety must also be a top priority, such as through the use of body worn cameras, CCTV, and campaigning.
- Lack of Wi-Fi and mobile connectivity on rail can also increase isolation on certain routes/ in certain areas and damage technology-based reporting ability. Lived experience in the shaping/trialling of any solution is key.

CASE STUDY:

Ampetronic ensure equitable access to audio through assistive listening

Accessibility in rail must go beyond minimal compliance and aim for truly equitable access for all passengers, particularly those with hearing loss. While the NTSN and PRM TSI acknowledge the importance of assistive listening in key locations such as public address systems and intercoms, the current regulatory requirements are insufficient. At present, mandatory provision is limited to ticket counters, with only one of each type required to be equipped with an assistive listening system. This results in widespread gaps in accessibility, leaving many passengers without the support they need.

Current Challenges in Assistive Listening Provision

Lack of Full Coverage – Many assistive listening systems only provide partial coverage in public areas, excluding large sections of stations, waiting areas, and onboard announcements.

Poor System Performance – Installed systems frequently do not meet IEC 60118-4 standards due to inadequate specification, improper commissioning, or lack of maintenance.

Limited Awareness and Compliance – Many operators and contractors lack understanding of assistive listening standards, leading to ineffective implementation and missed opportunities to improve accessibility.

Maintenance Neglect – Assistive listening systems often degrade over time due to poor maintenance regimes, reducing their usability and effectiveness for passengers who rely on them.

The Role of New Technologies

The upcoming introduction of Auracast™ represents an exciting evolution in assistive listening technology. Market enthusiasm is high, and projections indicate that by 2027, up to 80% of consumer devices (such as smartphones) will be capable of receiving an Auracast stream. However, as with any technological transition, there will be a period where hybrid solutions are necessary. Induction loops remain the most widely supported and universally accessible solution, meaning that a dual approach—supporting both Auracast and traditional induction loop systems—is essential to ensure an equitable experience for all users.

Recommendations for Improved Accessibility

Expand Mandatory Coverage – Assistive listening systems should be required at all critical audio points, including public address systems, help points, and intercoms, not just ticket counters.

Enforce Standards Compliance – Systems must be specified, installed, and maintained to IEC 60118-4 to ensure they provide meaningful benefit to end users.

Commit to Regular Maintenance – Operators must implement routine maintenance and testing to guarantee ongoing system effectiveness.

Prepare for the Future – While Auracast will be a powerful addition to assistive listening, a hybrid model with induction loop technology is necessary for the foreseeable future.

By addressing these issues, the rail industry can move towards truly inclusive audio accessibility, ensuring that all passengers—regardless of hearing ability—can access important travel information safely and effectively.

When Things Go Wrong

"My journey was going OK until I got to London, where my next train had a platform change to one with a broken lift. I had to wait for three more trains to leave before one was put on an accessible platform. The staff were great, though one said it might be quicker to go back towards my starting point – an hour away – and try to come into a different station or platform, which made me angry."

– Passenger with reduced mobility

Sadly, things do not, and never will, go perfectly for every journey for every passenger. When disruption does occur, passengers need confidence that they can still reach their destination with as little delay and complication as possible. Confidence in the system is vital – ensuring that failures are met with accountability, rather than inconvenience, is key to making rail travel truly accessible for all.

System failures and onward travel

Essential facilities such as lifts can become unavailable at short notice. A 2023 report by the ORR found that fewer than 50% of train operators provide real-time updates on these changes33. Passengers often report arriving at stations to find out that booked assistance is unavailable. Some operational changes not considered disruption, like a platform change or skipped station stop, disproportionally impact disabled passenger journeys.[58]

Front-line staff are the main customer touch point for rail users. Their understanding of transport needs can make or break situations where additional support is required. Though some operators should be commended for their efforts in increasing staffing and providing excellent training, many have been criticised by advocacy organisations for failing on both counts. However, even the best training will not prepare staff for every eventuality. Front-line staff therefore need to be empowered to make decisions and supported by management in doing so.

When service failures occur, operators should ensure all reasonable requests for onward travel are met, at no additional cost to the passenger, and with minimal disruption.

Communication of real-time journey information

Real-time service changes are not always updated in accessible formats, leaving passengers uninformed when disruptions occur.

Deaf and hearing-impaired passengers frequently report that platform announcements are inaudible, and digital display boards often lack real-time service updates. The use of British Sign Language (BSL) on station screens and real-time travel apps would enhance this.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Build travel confidence by training and empowering front-line staff.

Provide real-time updates to passengers across all communications media about all aspects of the journey. Make this information available to third parties so that it can be used in full by other wayfinding, ticketing and retail channels.

Operators should ensure all reasonable requests for onward travel are met, at no additional cost to the passenger, and with minimal disruption.

"I checked the accessibility information online the night before, but when I arrived, the lift was broken. There was no sign, and staff had no alternative solution. I had to abandon my journey altogether."

– Passenger with reduced mobility

"I was told my train was cancelled, but no one helped me rebook my journey. The station was understaffed, and I was left stranded for hours"

– visually impaired passenger

Passenger Assistance Failures

One of the most frustrating and stressful experiences for disabled passengers is when pre-booked Passenger Assist services fail. Many passengers arrive at their destination station only to find that no staff are present to help them disembark, leaving them stranded on the train. The ORR has recently launched a consultation on the best means of benchmarking the Passenger Assist performance of operators, the results of which are due in 2025.[95]

A key metric for the measuring of performance of the Passenger Assist service is whether the user was met within a reasonable timeframe to receive their assistance. Users were asked about their experience at one station that they travelled through on their journey. In 2023-2024, 80% of users were met at the station in question. This marks a significant decline from 2022-2023, when 84% of users were met within a reasonable timeframe. The proportion who were not met at all has risen from 7% to 10%.[32]

A key issue with Passenger Assist is the lack of real-time tracking for booked assistance requests – passengers are often left waiting indefinitely with no visibility on whether staff are on their way. Ride-sharing or food delivery apps provide live tracking of service requests, meaning that even if the service is delayed, the user has confidence that it will be delivered.

Some UK operators have PA staff tracking systems. However, these are not viewable by passengers.

> *"I pre-booked assistance, but when I arrived at the station, no one was there. The train left without me, and I had to wait over an hour for another service"*
>
> **– Passenger with reduced mobility**

A nationwide rollout of real-time tracking could significantly improve Passenger Assist reliability and accountability – the technology already exists.

In the EU, the Rail Passenger Rights Regulation mandates from 2023 onwards that rail operators are required to ensure seamless travel by providing necessary support at stations and during transfers. If a missed connection occurs due to a failure to provide pre-booked assistance, passengers must be offered alternative transport to their destination at no extra cost.[96] A similar charter should be adopted in the UK.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Implement real-time tracking of passenger assist requests.

Adopt a national charter stating If a missed connection occurs due to a failure to provide pre-booked assistance, passengers must be offered alternative transport to their destination at no extra cost.

Complaints and redress

Redress mechanisms play a crucial role in ensuring confidence to travel. Some other transportation modes – such as aviation and private hire vehicles – have developed much stronger passenger rights frameworks.

Disabled passengers frequently encounter barriers to lodging complaints or seeking compensation.[11] In 2023 the ORR reported that only 27% of disabled passengers who experienced an accessibility failure made a formal complaint, largely due to lack of awareness that they could.[33]

Redress for failures must be swift, efficient and quibble free. Operators must take responsibility for system improvements because of known deficiencies or repeated failures and communicate what they are doing to those the failures have impacted.[97] Digital systems and account-based travel could significantly improve and accelerate provision in this respect, and GBR should look to include such provision in its new rail retail provision.

In the EU, the Rail Passenger Rights Regulation strengthens passenger protections from 2023 onwards, including requiring compensation for delays, and national enforcement bodies must ensure compliance. A similar charter could be adopted in the UK for the GBR era.[96]

> *"From the beginning, I thought if I was one person encountering this many fails, how many disabled people are at home too terrified to go anywhere?" I want people to feel empowered to make a complaint."*
> **– Disabled person who won discrimination case**[97]

The UK should introduce a formal complaint and compensation structure, including specific provision for accessibility failures, ensuring that passengers receive automatic refunds or travel vouchers when assistance services fail.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Redress for failures must be swift, efficient and quibble free. This could be achieved through formal compensation structure fully integrated with future account-based ticketing systems.

Where patterns of repeated system failures present, operators must take decisive improvement action and communicate the action they have taken with impacted passengers.

RIA's 5 Key Asks

KEY ASK 1:

People directly impacted by decisions should have a direct say in those decisions.

All decisions related to accessibility and inclusivity should adhere to the 'nothing about us without us' principle. Inclusive representation in key rail policy and regulatory bodies should be mandated. An Accessibility and Inclusivity Panel with decision-making authority, rather than just an advisory or consultative role, should be established within Great British Railways (GBR).

- Accessibility should be integrated across the entire passenger experience as a core deliverable, rather than treated as an isolated issue or afterthought. Representation is the only way to achieve this.
- The 'nothing about us without us' principle is key to ensuring fair and equitable transport policy across all demographic groups, not just those with additional needs.
- The principle is simple, that any decisions which may impact one or more groups should include those groups in the decision-making process.
- This either occurs nationally, at policy and strategic levels (e.g. DPTAC), or on a project-by-project basis (e.g. community rail groups.
- For the case of accessible transport, advocacy and advisory groups currently provide input in an advisory manner only – they have no authority.
- If such groups had some authority over decisions, the today's railway would look very different, being more equitable and inclusive.
- Sometimes this may incur additional cost. However, there are countless examples where this approach has saved public money, by establishing that existing provision is good enough, or by ensuring 'right first time'.
- RIA believe the most effective way to achieve this in the GBR era is by creating an Accessibility and Inclusivity Panel within GBR, with decision-making authority. This should become part of the GBR legislation.
- It is noted that the government plans to publish a green paper in summer 2025, to test the proposed outline for a long-term rail strategy. This will explicitly set out plans for improving accessibility. It is imperative that the government include those people that the policy will affect in the creation of that policy paper.

For rolling stock:

- This input needs to be early in the purchasing cycle, at the specification phase, before the tender is issued.
- Manufacturers can only bid against the specification they are given. Inclusive design features over and above the minimum specification will typically not, in themselves, lead to a winning bid.
- NTSN's, including the PRM NTSN,[15] should be regarded as the absolute minimum compliance standard, not the target to aim for.

For infrastructure, retail and digital:

- Input needs to be both at a national strategy/policy level, but also on a project-by-project basis, where engagement with local stakeholders is vital.
- Stakeholders need to be empowered with real choices and influence, rather than just informed or consulted on changes.

KEY ASK 2:

Reform and fast-track the programme delivering station accessibility improvements.

The Access for All programme needs to be managed more effectively to provide improvements at an accelerated rate. This is vital to meet the needs of efficient investment for the Government, and access to travel for passengers. Streamlined processes are necessary to ensure that committed funds are invested efficiently rather than returned to treasury. Innovations should be adopted at pace, to accelerate deployment by enabling delivery of more, with less.

- Step-free access and level boarding are the most requested accessibility features across numerous 3rd party research publications.
- For a journey to be viable, travel to the station, the departure station, interchange station, destination station and onward travel all need to be accessible. Currently, only 55% of UK mainline stations meet the ORR's 'A' or 'B1' step-free status definition, alongside countless metro and underground stations.
- Access to travel and the AfA is not, and should not be, a party-political issue. Successive governments have funded the programme, investing around £500m. This needs to continue.
- However, by Network Rail's own admission, AfA is failing to deliver. In the last control period, a significant portion of committed funding was returned to treasury due to bureaucratic and project delays. CP7 is off to a sluggish start. This is not good enough. Network Rail have begun an AfA workstream within their RICOE (Railway Investment Centre of Excellence), and this initiative is welcomed.
- RIA estimates that with client-side efficiencies, process streamlining, full budget deployment, a rolling programme of work rather than project-by-project deployment, and early adoption of supply-chain led innovations, the number of stations made accessible since 2006 could have doubled.
- The DfT's solution – setting up yet another panel to investigate what has gone wrong – is not a solution which will deliver any tangible benefit to the treasury or passenger. In the GBR era, AfA's successor must be completely re-thought. It should be managed by a dedicated department with a focus on speed, innovation and delivery.
- This department needs a stable vision, strong and empowered leadership incentivised by KPI's and open to supply chain innovation to hit challenging targets. Business models must be adopted, and contracts written, to ensure efficient delivery.
- Innovative ways of working should be adopted to deliver more with less. A rolling programme of work should be planned with the supply chain.
- Innovation activities should include a thorough review of standards to ensure that gold plating is not preventing quick and easy wins. For example, mandating multi-million pound lift installations and bridge reconstructions where simple staffed crossings may suffice on quiet lines.
- In 2023, Network Rail was passed the largest data set ever collected on station accessibility. This data set has an important part to play going forward in speeding up decision making on accessibility investment. It is imperative that data sets like these are kept up to date by Station Facility Owners (SFOs) to realise their full value.
- It should be mandated that all stations above a certain passenger threshold implement step-free access within five years, and the rest within a decade. All targets should be legally binding and enforced. This may seem an unattainable goal current rates of progress. However, it should be noted that the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act65 already mandated a full compliance date of 2020.

KEY ASK 3:

Mandate digital accessibility and data transparency.

The data needed to plan and manage journeys needs to be transparent, standardised, timely and accurate. All journey updates need to be provided in formats accessible to all. It should be mandated that websites and apps follow content accessibility guidelines. Passenger assist should be integrated with GBR's ticket booking processes and offer real-time digital tracking by default.

- Incorrect, untimely, insufficient or inaccessible information can be as big a blocker to travel as inadequate physical infrastructure.
- This creates a lack of trust in the system which is a further blocker to travel. The anxiety of not knowing the truth, created by unreliable updates, repeated information failures, or information that is just plain wrong, means many of those that are otherwise able to take advantage of the benefits rail brings, are unable or unwilling to.
- To allow PRMs and passengers with hidden disabilities to travel with confidence knowing that their needs are accommodated from home to destination, the experience needs to be consistent across operators and stations, in urban and rural areas. There exists a brilliant opportunity for GBR to take the lead.
- RIA commends the fantastic progress in providing live accessibility updates over recent years, however, more can be done.
- To ensure transparency, all accessibility-related data should be made freely available, in an agreed, standardised format. The data provided by operators needs to be timely and accurate.
- All station and train operators need to take steps to ensure that up-to date service information is presented in the range of formats required by travelling public. The same principle needs to extend to ticket vending machines and help points. This should be mandated in all major stations immediately and deployed in secondary stations within 5 years.
- The industry should form a Digital/AI collaboration group with designers, OEMs, technology experts, operators and passenger representatives, to identify ways of integrating the latest technology into the passenger experience in a consistent manner across all operators.
- RIA commends the completion of a nationwide accessibility audit. The results of this audit should be made available to all. The results should be used to identify where recent innovations can accelerate and reduce the cost of key improvements.
- Improving Passenger Assist (PA) booking times from 24h to 2h has made a massive difference to travel flexibility. The industry should strive to reduce this further. This could include allowing, but not guaranteeing, shorter times.
- PA feedback is still mixed. Failures of this support have lead to some of the most dehumanising passenger experiences, and fear of these experiences is enough to dissuade people from travel. RIA recognises that there is a concerted cross-industry effort to improve on this, which should continue.
- Future improvements should include full integration with GBR's proposed ticketing and retail system, and real-time, live tracking of assist bookings.

KEY ASK 4:

Create a railway culture built on respect and helpfulness, where the focus is on ensuring everybody's journey is important.

Staff should be confident helping all passengers, and empowered to provide adequate support in all situations. Training should be mandated, standardised, and inclusively developed in partnership with passengers with additional needs. When service failures occur, operators should ensure all reasonable requests for onward travel are met and provide adequate redress without delay.

- Front-line staff are the main customer touch point for rail users. Their understanding of transport needs can make or break situations where additional support is required.
- Though some operators should be commended for their efforts in increasing staffing and providing excellent training, many have been criticised by advocacy organisations for failing on both counts.
- Through no fault of their own, front-line staff are often unprepared for the range of support requests they may face, and unempowered to provide adequate support.
- Training and empowerment are the fastest way to overcome these limitations.
- Training should be mandated, standardised, and inclusively developed in partnership with passengers with additional needs.
- Even the best training will not prepare staff for every eventuality. Front-line staff therefore need to be empowered to make decisions and supported by management in doing so.
- For many, a preplanned railway journey is difficult enough to navigate. However, when disruption does occur, passengers need confidence that they can still reach their final destination with as little delay and complication as possible, whatever happens outside of their control.
- When service failures occur, operators should ensure all reasonable requests for onward travel are met (at no additional cost to the passenger) and provide adequate redress. A requirement to do so could be made a contractual mandate or legally enforceable provision.
- Redress for failures must be swift, efficient and quibble free. Digital systems and account-based travel could significantly improve and accelerate provision in this respect.

KEY ASK 5:

Mandate inclusive and accessible onboard facilities

Accessible design should be ingrained at all stages of the passenger journey, not an afterthought. All rolling stock purchases or refurbishments should adopt an 'Accessibility First' approach, as demonstrated by Nexus, Merseyrail, TfL and others. Unassisted boarding should be the absolute priority, with a full compliance date set within the next decade. Walk-up, assisted boarding should be provided wherever possible until this is achieved.

- Currently, accessibility is often treated as an afterthought. RIA Advocate for an "Accessibility First" approach, where the entire railway system – stations and rolling stock – is designed from the outset to be fully accessible and inclusive.
- If correctly adopted, this approach can save public money, by avoiding costly retrofitting and ensuring the product is "right first time".
- Standards, including the PRM NTSN,[14] should be regarded as the absolute minimum compliance standard, not the optimum product for any particular route. Consequently, adherence to standards should not indicate that a solution is suitable for all, and standards should be exceeded where possible.
- Input on ideal provision needs to be early in the purchasing cycle, at the specification phase, before the tender is issued, as manufacturers can only bid against the specification they are provided with.
- Travel should never be an isolating experience – new requirements for floor plans and aisle access should allow a wheelchair passenger to sit with others and not alone next to luggage or toilets. Provision should be made for access to the same facilities as all others – e.g. the buffet car or quiet coach.
- To inspire travel confidence, every journey a consistent experience across operators, stations, urban and rural areas. This includes knowing what to expect when boarding, and what facilities will be available onboard.
- Network-wide level boarding has been proven to boost ridership numbers and elevate the travel experience for all. It should be a fundamental target which the whole industry works together to achieve.
- Access points and other measures have provided a good interim solution to boost accessibility, but they are not a long-term fix. Rather than limit passengers with reduced mobility to a single boarding place, the industry needs to design a way to make all boarding and disembarking points inclusive for all.
- Setting a mandatory compliance date will help accelerate this transition.

References

1. Railway Industry Association. Railway Industry Association [Internet]. Available from: http://www.riagb.org.uk
2. Oxford Economics. The economic contribution of UK rail [Internet]. 2021 Sep. Available from: https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/resource/The-economic-contribution-of-UK-rail/
3. Railway Industry Association. A Railway Innovation Strategy: Getting Ready for Great British Railways [Internet]. London; 2022 Apr. Available from: https://www.riagb.org.uk/RIA/RIA/Newsroom/Press_Releases/A_Railway_Innovation_Strategy.aspx
4. Railway Industry Association. Data and Digital Technologies in Rail [Internet]. London; 2023 Mar. Available from: https://www.riagb.org.uk/RIA/RIA/Newsroom/Publications%20Folder/Data_and_Digitial_Technologies_in_Rail.aspx
5. Transport Select Committee. Future of transport data [Internet]. 2023. Available from: https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7793/future-of-transport-data/
6. Railway Industry Association. Destination: Revenue Growth [Internet]. London; 2024 Mar. Available from: https://www.riagb.org.uk/RIA/RIA/Newsroom/Publications%20Folder/Destination_Revenue_Growth.aspx
7. His Majesty King Charles III. Oral statement to Parliament: The King's Speech 2024 [Internet]. 2024. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-kings-speech-2024
8. UK Government: Department for Transport, Network Rail. Access for All: funding to improve accessibility at rail stations [Internet]. 2019. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/access-for-all-programme
9. Omio Travel. Europe's Most Accessible Railway Nations [Internet]. https://www.omio.co.uk/. 2023. Available from: https://www.omio.co.uk/c/europes-most-accessible-railway-nations/
10. Verkehrsverbund Rhein-Sieg. Barrier-free travel by bus and train [Internet]. Available from: https://www.vrs.de/en/connections/barrier-free-travel-by-bus-and-train
11. UK Government: Office of Rail & Road. Challenges in Lodging Accessibility Complaints in Rail [Internet]. 2024 Feb. Available from: https://www.orr.gov.uk/search-news/regulator-calls-rail-operators-improve-complaints-processes-and-redress-provision
12. Network Rail, Dewar A, Anatole F. Inclusive Design Manual NR/GN/CIV/300/04 [Internet]. 2024 Jun. Available from: https://www.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/NR_GN_CIV_300_04_Inclusive-Design.pdf
13. National Centre for Accessible Transport. Research report: Understanding and Identifying Barriers to Transport [Internet]. 2024 Nov. Available from: https://www.ncat.uk/projects/understanding-and-identifying-barriers-to-transport/
14. UK Government. Equality Act 2010 [Internet]. UK Government; 2010. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents
15. Department for Transport. Railway Interoperability – The Railways (Interoperability) Regulations 2011: NATIONAL TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION NOTICE: Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRM). UK Government; Jan 1, 2021.
16. Scope, Ward E. Accessibility and Disability facts and figures [Internet]. Accessibility and disability: UK research and statistics. 2021. Available from: https://business.scope.org.uk/accessibility-and-disability-facts-and-figures/
17. The Donaldson Trust. Neurodiversity [Internet]. Available from: https://www.donaldsons.org.uk/neurodiversity/
18. The Office for National Statistics (ONS), Storey A. Living longer: how our population is changing and why it matters [Internet]. 2018. Available from: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/livinglongerhowourpopulationischangingandwhyitmatters/2018-08-13
19. Department for Education. Situational disabilities [Internet]. Accessibility and inclusive design manual. Available from: https://accessibility.education.gov.uk/training/accessibility-inclusion/page-10
20. Department for Education. Temporary disabilities [Internet]. Accessibility and inclusive design manual. Available from: https://accessibility.education.gov.uk/training/accessibility-inclusion/page-9
21. Women and Equalities House of Commons Committee. Accessibility of products and services to disabled people [Internet]. 2024 Mar. Available from: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmwomeq/605/report.html
22. Oxford Economics. The Economic, Environmental, and Social Opportunities that Rail Brings to the UK [Internet]. 2022 Nov. Available from: https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/resource/the-economic-environmental-and-social-opportunities-that-rail-brings-to-the-uk/
23. Transport For All. Are we there yet? Barriers to transport for disabled people in 2023 [Internet]. 2023 Dec. Available from: https://www.transportforall.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/NATS_Full_PDF.pdf
24. Office for National Statistics (ONS). Disability, England and Wales [Internet]. Census 2021. 2021. Available from: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/disabilityenglandandwales/census2021
25. Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB). Key information and statistics on sight loss in the UK [Internet]. Knowledge and Research hub. Available from: https://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/health-social-care-education-professionals/knowledge-and-research-hub/key-information-and-statistics-on-sight-loss-in-the-uk/
26. Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID aka A on HL. Key statistics on prevalence [Internet]. Our facts and statements. Available from: https://rnid.org.uk/get-involved/research-and-policy/facts-and-figures/

27. Mencap. How common is learning disability in the UK? [Internet]. Available from: https://www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/research-and-statistics/how-common-learning-disability
28. NHS. Dyslexia [Internet]. National Health Service. Available from: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia/
29. Guzman-Castillo AA et al. Forecasted trends in disability and life expectancy in England and Wales up to 2025: a modelling study. Lancet Public Health [Internet]. 2017; Available from: www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468 2667(17)30091-9/fulltext
30. Dennis G. How the Railways Will Fix the Future: Rediscovering the Essential Brilliance of the Iron Road. 1st ed. Repeater; 2024.
31. Tyler N. Creating a public realm for all [Internet]. 2024 Jul. Available from: https://www.ciht.org.uk/knowledge-resource-centre/resources/policy-technical/creating-a-public-realm-for-all/
32. Leonard Chesire. Get On Board 2020: Making the economic case for "levelling up" inclusive transport [Internet]. 2020. Available from: https://www.leonardcheshire.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Get-on-Board-2020-policy-report.pdf
33. Office of Office of Rail & Road (ORR) and M.E.L Research. Experiences of Passenger Assist research report [Internet]. 2023 Jul. Available from: https://www.orr.gov.uk/monitoring-regulation/rail/passengers/passenger-assistance/research
34. www.wearepurple.org.uk. The Purple Pound – Infographic [Internet]. 2015. Available from: https://wearepurple.org.uk/the-purple-pound-infographic/
35. National Centre for Accessible Transport. NCAT Resource collection [Internet]. 2024. Available from: https://www.ncat.uk/what-we-do/ncat-resource-collection/
36. Disability Rights UK. Transport and Isolation [Internet]. Available from: https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/transport-and-isolation
37. Transport for London. Travel in London: Understanding our diverse communities [Internet]. 2019 [cited 2025 Feb 27]. Available from: content.tfl.gov.uk/travel-in-london-understanding-our-diverse-communities-2019.pdf
38. Leonard Cheshire and ComRes. Leonard Cheshire: 2018 Survey of Disabled Adults, Transport data [Internet]. 2018. Available from: https://savanta.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Leonard-Cheshire_Disabled-adults-tables_Transport-2019-v2.pdf
39. Motability foundation. The Transport Accessibility Gap: The opportunity to improve the accessibility of transport for disabled people [Internet]. 2022 Mar. Available from: https://www.motabilityfoundation.org.uk/media/iwaidhxk/motability_transport-accessibility-gap-report_march-2022_final.pdf
40. International Transport Forum. The Economic Benefits of Improved Accessibility to Transport Systems [Internet]. 2017 May. Available from: https://www.itf-oecd.org/economic-benefits-improved-accessibility-transport-systems
41. UK Government: Department for Transport (DfT). DPTAC reference frame: working towards a fully accessible railway. [Internet]. 2023. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dptac-reference-frame-working-towards-a-fully-accessible-railway/dptac-reference-frame-working-towards-a-fully-accessible-railway
42. The Campaign for Level Boarding [Internet]. Available from: https://www.levelboarding.org.uk/
43. Chen F, Chen Z. High-speed rail and happiness. Transp Res Part A Policy Pract [Internet]. 2023 Apr; Available from: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0965856423000551
44. NatCen Social Research. Transport, health, and wellbeing: An evidence review for the Department for Transport [Internet]. 2019. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5dd6b167e5274a794517b633/Transport__health_and_wellbeing.pdf
45. Department for Transport. The Impact of a Person's Impairment when Accessing Transport and the Social and Economic Losses as a Result of Restricted Access: Rapid Evidence Review [Internet]. London; 2015 [cited 2025 Feb 21]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-accessibility-rapid-evidence-review
46. Disabled Person's Railcard. Are you eligible? Is this Railcard for you? [Internet]. Available from: https://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/are-you-eligible/
47. Office for Rail and Road. Disabled Persons Railcards [Internet]. 2025. Available from: https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/passenger-accessibility/disabled-persons-railcards/
48. National Centre for Accessible Transport (NCAT). Transport Barriers Database (Interactive) [Internet]. [cited 2025 Feb 24]. Available from: https://www.ncat.uk/what-we-do/transport-barriers-database/
49. DPO Forum England. Disabled people's manifesto [Internet]. [cited 2025 Feb 20]. Available from: https://www.disabledpeoplesmanifesto.com/manifesto
50. National Autistic Society. Travelling by Train or Bus [Internet]. 2025. Available from: https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/transport/travelling-by-train-or-bus
51. National Autistic Society. Accessible Environments [Internet]. 2022 Aug. Available from: https://dy55nndrxke1w.cloudfront.net/file/24/UQ0ocJfUQAI68NWUQXM_UQPonhF/Accessible_environments_0822.pdf
52. National Autistic Society. Autism Know How Training [Internet]. 2025. Available from: https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/autism-know-how/training
53. Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB). Sight loss and technology briefing [Internet]. 2021 Sep. Available from: https://media.rnib.org.uk/documents/APDF_Sight_Loss_and_Technology_Briefing.pdf
54. W3C Web Accessibility Initiative. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) international standard [Internet]. 2024 Dec [cited 2025 Feb 21]. Available from: https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/
55. Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB). Case studies for Motability Report [Internet]. 2023 Apr. Available from: https://www.rnib.org.uk/documents/1602/Motability_report_Case_Studies.pptx

56. JR East (Japan Railway Company). Accessibility [Internet]. Available from: https://www.jreast.co.jp/multi/en/customer_support/accessibility.html
57. Sense. Potential and Possibility 2024: Improving experiences of public transport [Internet]. 2024. Available from: https://www.sense.org.uk/about-us/research/potential-and-possibility-research/potential-and-possibility-2024-improving-experiences-of-public-transport/
58. Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID aka A on HL. Consultation Response Office of Rail and Road: Improving Assisted Travel January 2018 [Internet]. 2018 Jan. Available from: https://rnid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ORR-consultation_assisted-travel_AoHL-response.pdf
59. Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID aka A on HL. It Does Matter [Internet]. 2024 Dec. Available from: https://rnid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/IDM-BSL-report.pdf
60. Disability Rights UK. Co-production at a Glance [Internet]. Available from: https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/co-production-glance
61. Disability Rights UK. Public Transport Failing Disabled People [Internet]. Available from: https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/public-transport-failing-disabled-people
62. UK Government: Department for Transport (DfT). The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee annual report 2023 to 2024 [Internet]. 2024. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-disabled-persons-transport-advisory-committee-annual-report-2023-to-2024/the-disabled-persons-transport-advisory-committee-annual-report-2023-to-2024
63. Disability News Service. Government's access advisers face criticism for 'meaningless' response on rail reform. 2023; Available from: https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/governments-access-advisers-face-criticism-for-meaningless-response-on-rail-reform/
64. UK Government. Equality Act 2010: guidance [Internet]. 2013 [cited 2025 Feb 25]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance
65. Philip Lewis. Disability Discrimination Act: 1995 and now. UK Parliament, House of Lords Library. 2020.
66. UK Government. The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail [Internet]. 2021 May. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-british-railways-williams-shapps-plan-for-rail
67. UK Government. National Disability Strategy [Internet]. 2021 Jul. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-disability-strategy
68. UK Parliament. Railways Act 2005 [Internet]. UK Public General Acts 2005 c. 14 2005. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/14/contents
69. UK Government: Department for Transport. Persons with reduced mobility technical specification for interoperability: implementation plan [Internet]. 2020 Dec. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/persons-with-reduced-mobility-technical-specification-for-interoperability-implementation-plan
70. Pashby T. Network Rail's accessibility programme 'significantly underperformed' in last five years. New Civil Engineer. 2024.
71. UK Government: Department for Transport. Inclusive Transport Strategy [Internet]. 2018. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-transport-strategy
72. UK Government: Department for Transport. Inclusive Transport Leaders Scheme [Internet]. 2024. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/inclusive-transport-leaders-scheme
73. UK Government: Department for Transport. Accessible railway stations: design standards [Internet]. 2015 Mar. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accessible-railway-stations-design-standards
74. UK Government: Department for Transport. Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee [Internet]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disabled-persons-transport-advisory-committee
75. UK Government: Office of Rail & Road (ORR). UK Digital Accessibility Standards Review [Internet]. 2023 Feb. Available from: https://www.orr.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-07/2022-2023-passenger-assist-report-by-mel.pdf
76. National Rail, RDG. Passenger Assistance App [Internet]. Available from: https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/help-and-assistance/passenger-assistance-app/
77. LNER. Accessible Travel Policy [Internet]. 2024 Apr. Available from: https://www.lner.co.uk/globalassets/lner2903-accessible-travel---accessible-travel-policy---april-2024-route-map-update.pdf
78. Westlake M. Accessibility has improved for disabled passengers but more must be done [Internet]. Office of Rail and Road. 2023. Available from: https://www.orr.gov.uk/search-news/accessibility-has-improved-disabled-passengers-more-must-be-done
79. UK Government. Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) [Internet]. 2000. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2000/1970/contents
80. UK Government: Department for Transport. New onboard announcements to make Britain's buses accessible for everyone [Internet]. 2023. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-onboard-announcements-to-make-britains-buses-accessible-for-everyone
81. UK Government: Department for Transport. Taxi and private hire vehicle statistics, England, 2024 (revised) [Internet]. 2024. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-statistics-england-2024/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-statistics-england-2024#accessibility
82. Scope. This stops me living my life the way I want to [Internet]. Available from: https://www.scope.org.uk/news-and-stories/this-stops-me-living-my-life-the-way-i-want-to
83. Transport for London. Passengers and accessibility [Internet]. Available from: https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/taxis-and-private-hire/passengers-and-accessibility

84. Rural Community Network. Community Transport is a Solution, not a Burden. 2023; Available from: https://www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org/news/community-transport-is-a-solution-not-a-burden
85. Via. Via takes over Berlin paratransit service for people with disabilities: "BerlMobil" service can now be booked online and through a mobile app. 2021 Sep 23; Available from: https://ridewithvia.com/news/via-takes-over-berlin-paratransit-service-for-people-with-disabilities-berlmobil-service-can-now-be-booked-online-and-through-a-mobile-app
86. European Rail Infrastructure Managers. Celebrating 2021 Year of Rail: Progress in the Netherlands in making stations and rail accessible for persons with disabilities [Internet]. 2021. Available from: https://eimrail.org/2021/05/20/celebrating-2021-year-of-rail-progress-in-the-netherlands-in-making-stations-and-rail-accessible-for-persons-with-disabilities/
87. Active Travel England. Cycle-rail guidance: Cycle-rail toolkit 3 [Internet]. 2023 Jun. Available from: https://activetravelengland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/Cycle-rail%20guidance%20-%20Cycle-rail%20toolkit%203%20-%20accessible%20version.pdf
88. Transport for London. Step-free access [Internet]. Available from: https://tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/step-free-access
89. Transport for London. Step-free tube guide map. Available from: https://content.tfl.gov.uk/step-free-tube-guide-map.pdf
90. SPT. Accessibility & mobility. Available from: https://www.spt.co.uk/subway/accessibility-mobility/
91. Nexus. Access for all [Internet]. Available from: https://www.nexus.org.uk/metro/looking-after-our-customers/access-all
92. UK Government: Office of Rail & Road. Passenger Lifts at Stations – Performance and Information [Internet]. 2024 Mar. Available from: https://www.orr.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/passenger-lifts-at-stations-report-march-2024.pdf
93. Transport for London. Plan an accessible journey [Internet]. Available from: https://tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility/plan-an-accessible-journey
94. Network Rail. Access for All update [Internet]. 2020. Available from: https://www.networkrail.co.uk/stories/access-for-all-update
95. Office of Rail and Road. Benchmarking operators' performance in rail passenger assistance [Internet]. 2024. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/benchmarking-operators-performance-in-rail-passenger-assistance
96. Casas D. The revised Regulation on Rail Passenger Rights enters into force – What's new for persons with disabilities? [Internet]. European Disability Forum. 2023. Available from: https://www.edf-feph.org/the-revised-regulation-on-rail-passenger-rights-enters-into-force-whats-new-for-persons-with-disabilities/
97. Pring J. Train company pays £17,000 after repeatedly leaving disabled woman stranded [Internet]. 2021. Available from: https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/train-company-pays-17000-after-repeatedly-leaving-disabled-woman-stranded/


MIND THE GAP

This document is available online in various accessible formats at:

https://www.riagb.org.uk/RIA/Newsroom/Publications%20Folder/Journey_To_Equality

If you would like this document in any other format, please contact RIA:

Phone: +44 (0)207 201 0777
Email: RIA@riagb.org.uk